V.N. SRINIVASA DESIKAN

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he Bronze Gallery

MOTHER GODDESS
Adichanallur, Tirunelveli Dt.
About seventh Century B.C.

GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI

GUIDE
to
THE BRONZE GALLERY

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PREFACE

The Chennai Museum has a rich collection of South Indian bronzes, and some of the finest masterpieces are on view in its Bronze Gallery. This guide to that Gallery by Thiru. V.N. Srinivasa Desikan, who is the Curator in charge of the collection, is meant to help the visitor appreciate the bronzes on display more deeply by acquainting him with those characteristics which set each piece apart from the other. This is the revised edition of the Guide which was first issued in 1972. Thiru Srinivasa Desikan has given lucid notes about choice bronzes on view. The illustrations of some of the best pieces enhance further the value of this book. This has been excellently printed in the Government Museum Press, and everyone connected with this work deserves praise for the achievement.

Government Museum,
Egmore, Chennai - 8
July 14, 1983.

N. HARINARAYANA
Director of Museums.

SOUTH INDIAN BRONZES

An Introduction

The history of metal art in South India is of great antiquity and this is a living art today. This is practised even today by craftsmen, "who have kept alive the ancient technique both by preserving the texts relating to the mode of preparation as also the contemplative hymns or dhyana-lokas which describe the forms of individual icons".

The images are cast by the cire-perdue or lost-wax process. "Cire-perdue is a composite French term. Cire means wax and perdue means lost. When translated into English, the term Cire perdue would mean 'lost wax". It is so called from the fact that the wax model which serves as the core of operation is drained out before the actual casting takes place. This process is common for all types of casting where the wax is replaced by metal. In sanskrit, the term used for this process is *Madhuchchistavidhana*.

Early Texts:

A vast body of our ancient literature-the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Upanishads, and the Sutras - speak of casting of images, production of ornamental metal bowls (made of tin, lead and silver), and metal smiths. Early Tamil literature speaks of the numerous sculptures that were fashioned in metal, wood ivory or stucco. Since image worship has been the key note of the Hindu way of religious life, the modelling of different images in different forms is referred to in the early silpa texts and agamas.

Although the vast literature mentioned above "provides much information relating to metal work and the craftsman in a general way, it contains little information about the actual process of casting of metal figures. It is not until much after the Christian Era, that we come across detailed recorded instructions about the procedures to be followed in the matter of casting of images".

The method of casting of images is elaborately dealt with in the **Silpasastra** and there is a small chapter on it in the treatise **Manasara**. Yet in another treatise, **Abhilashitarta Chintamani** or **Manasollasa** Chalukyan King Somesvara, a clear picture of casting images in metal is available. These silpa and agama texts deal with construction of temples, fashioning of icons with iconographical details and lay down the data for the size and form of these icons. The sthapathis (metal workers) followed the instructions that are given in the silpa and agama texts while preparing the images.

"In the **Silpasastras** are laid down elaborate and strict rules regarding auspicious time when one can start the work, the composition of the ingredients to be used for casting, the various measurements of the different parts of the body and their relative proportions, details of the different stages of casting, the various postures and inclinations of the figures etc". Each and every icon has a contemplative hymn, known as dhyanasloka and the sthapathi at work fashions the image according to the description given in the hymn. These describe the "spiritual character and personality of the deity and the lakshanas or formula giving the measurements and suggesting the pattern and form of the figures in keeping with the dhyanas". While preparing the icons, the sthapathi shows his skill and workmanship within the rules prescribed in the canons of **Silpasastras** and creates remarkable pieces of high quality and receives universal appreciation in unequivocal terms.

Mode of Casting

There are two methods of casting images in metal: solid and hollow. In Sanskrit *Ghana* and *Sushira* are used respectively for solid casting and hollow casting. The process of making solid images is as follows: The bees wax and dammar (*Kunkillium* in Tamil) must be correctly mixed with a little oil. The wax thus prepared is known as "prepared wax" with which the required image is fashioned by the sthapathi. Care is to be taken while making the wax model, as this serves as a negative for ob-

taining the finished product, (metal icon). "The technical and aesthetic excellence and perfection of the cast icon depends upon these qualities being present in the wax model". In one sense the preparation of wax model is both a process and a product. The technical details such as measurements and the artistic details in the ornaments and drapery have to be carefully verified, before the wax model is ready for casting. "A few cross scrapings, made with prepared wax are also fixed on to the wax model, the number depending on the size of the image to be made, to provide strength for the wax model on the one hand and to facilitate easy flow of the molten metal to the various parts on the other. A wax rod ending in a funnel-shaped flange, known as the wax runner, is also fixed to the base of the wax model. Later on, when the mould is heated and the wax is drained out, this serves as an ingress for the molten metal".

Next comes mould making. The wax model is given several coatings, with a fine clay secured from ant hill and mixed with combustible material like paddy husk and cowdung to make a thick mass. Initially the clay is applied in the form of a solution, which enables it to go into every crevice. Then heavier and heavier coating is added, till it finally becomes a regular lump. The sthapathi should be meticulously careful "in not leaving any space on the wax model uncovered and also in removing any accumulation of air bubble from the surface of the coating". The clay mould is then carefully dried in the mild sun or in the shade. Care should be taken to see that no cracks are formed and the wax model is not melted.

After a few days, the clay mould is ready for casting. When the wax model is prepared and is ready for the preparation of clay mould, arrangements for preparing the metal alloy are carried out. The number of metals to be used in the alloy are five which were considered to be highly auspicious. These five metals are: copper, silver, gold, brass and lead and these are popularly known as panchaloha. According to the analysis carried out in the Museum

Laboratory copper is mainly found in larger proportion, while the other metals are added in small proportion. The other metals are, tin and lead and in traces arsenic and iron. Presence of lead helps the sthapathi to chisel and engrave on the icon. Gold and silver which are said to be added to the bronze according to Silpasastras are, however, hardly found on actual analysis.

Result of Chemical Analysis (per cent)

	9th Cent. A.D.	*10-11th Cent. A.D.*	*13th Cent. A.D.*	*15th Cent. A.D.*	*17th Cent. A.D.*
Copper	83-39	86-88	91-05	96-29	91-25
Tin	16-61	10-44	2-86	2-58	6-66
Arsenic	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr
Lead	Tr	1-48	6-09	1-09	2-02
Iron	Tr	1-19	Tr	0-06	0-07

(Extract from the article by Dr. S. Paramasivan on "Electrolytic Restoration of Bronze statues and Inscribed Copper plates" published in "The Proceedings of the Indian Academy of Sciences", Vol. XIII No. 1, p. 53-63 1941).

The clay mould with the wax model inside it, is baked skillfully over an open ground oven, which is fuelled by cow dung cakes. The mould is sufficiently heated to drain out the wax through the funnel shaped flange already referred to above. Even after all the wax has run out of it, the mould is heated a little again. "The heating of the mould has two other functions as well: it removes air-bubbles from inside the cavity and also it prevents sudden cooling down of molten metal, which otherwise might cause uneven surface".

When the alloy is ready, it is poured through the orifice into the empty clay mould. The molten metal is care-

fully poured in a thin, even and continuous stream. Care is taken to see that the hot stream of metal reaches every nook and corner and the image cast should be near perfect. When the entire empty mould is occupied by the metal, it (the mould with the molten metal inside) is allowed to cool down gradually. Then the mould is broken open, and the solid metal image is obtained. Since this image is rough, final touching is given to the image and this is done by cleaning, finishing and engraving. Clay particles sticking to the image are thoroughly removed. Details of the dress and ornaments are carefully engraved in the image, and it is at this point the sthapathi shows his skill in the creation of his work of art.

In the case of hollow images, the subject is modelled in clay and their core is coated with wax which in turn is covered with a coat of clay. After draining the wax out by heating, the mould is used for casting the hollow images.

Majority of the images in this Museum's collections belong to solid casting method, while some of the bronzes representing the gramadevatas are of hollow casting.

History of Bronzes:

The earliest specimen in metal in Tamil Nadu is the prehistoric figure of a mother goddess from Adichanallur, (Tirunelveli Dist.) and may date back to 7th Century B.C. The metal icons in historical period have survived from the time of the Pallavas. The end of the Sixth Century A.D. and the beginning of Seventh Century A.D. witnessed vigorous activities in temple building. Mahendravarman and his son Narasimhavarman were responsible for the rock cut temples and relief sculptures, while Narasimhavarman II also called Rajasimha and Nandivarman Pallavamalla were responsible for masonry temples or all stone temples. The period of 250 years from 600 A.D. to 850 A.D. is an important epoch in the fields of architecture, sculpture, religion and rituals. Pallavas, being staunch Saivites, Saivite iconography was developed and various forms of Siva were dedicated in the temple complex. The saivite

(nayanmars) and Vaishavite saints (alvars) through their devotional hymns propagated the Bhakthi movement. With the enlargement of temple complex, the rituals such as worship, bathing etc., connected with the temple were gradually elaborated. Festivals occupied pre-eminent position in the mode of worship. An inscription of the eighth century A.D. mentions the Chitrai festival. When the rituals and festivals were observed in the temples, the images were taken out for procession. Thus the necessity to have processional deities (utsavamurtis) in metal was felt. Since this was only a beginning the images were fashioned on small size and the bigger ones were made during the latter period of the Pallavas. It may be noted that the Pallava icons are small and in some cases they are less than one foot. The bronzes that were made during the late 9th Century A.D. and early 10th Century A.D. are bigger than the Pallava ones.

The Cholas who succeeded the Pallavas in the middle of the 9th Century A.D. were great patrons of art in all its ramifications. The first two kings Vijayalaya and Aditaya I were inspired by the hymns of *Nayanmars* and caused the construction of a large number of temples. Raja Raja I the builder of the great temple at Thanjavur was well known for his tolerance of other religions like his forefathers and made endowments to the Buddhist *vihara* at Nagapattinam while his sister Kundavai was interested in the building of Jain shrines.

The festivals also were performed in large numbers and it is said that Raja Raja I performed nearly thirty festivals in a year, and the important festival was the annual festival which lasted for nine days. Simultaneously a number of *utsavamurtis* were fashioned to meet the needs of the temples.

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The Eleventh Century witnessed certain new aspects in the temple building activities such as providing a separate shrine for Devis.

When the building activities were in progress, the production of metal images also increased in the 12th and 13th centuries. Festivals were on the increase. But with the numerous bronzes coming to the temple, the workmanship slowly became poorer. This was due to the fact that emphasis was on the quantity, size and technique and not on quality. But still there are some good pieces belonging to this period.

The Vijayanagar period (14th, 15th, and 16th centuries) also witnessed the stress on quantity than of quality. Conventionalism of form and elaboration of ornament are the main tendencies during the period.

From 1600 A.D. onwards there was more stress in the conventionalised emblems, draperies and ornaments. The general effect of the icons produced during this period is one of rigidity and intensified conventionalization.

Dating of Bronzes:

The dating of the metal icons which is very essential for appreciating better the history of this art is a question on which no consensus of opinion has emerged not withstanding a fairly exhaustive and analytical study of a sufficiently good number of icons unearthed in different regions are indicative of more than one stylistic mooring. A negligible number of images like a few Buddhist icons from Nagapattinam, the image of a seated Kali from Senniyanvidhuthi and the image of a seated Vishnu under worship in the temples at Tirucherai, Thanjavur Dt. and the Jain Tirthankara (Adinatha) from Gidangal, South Arcot Dt. carry inscriptions on their pedestals. In these the palaeography of the inscriptions may be of help in arriving at a rough idea about the chronology of the images even though implicit in it is the surmise that the pedestal of the icon is chronologically coeval with the image and not

solded later. As all the bronzes do not carry any paleographical evidence with them, one has to depend upon the basis of style.

The earliest metal images on display in the Museum are the Buddhist icons from Amaravati, which on the basis of their drapery, decorative details and physiognomical features have been roughly assigned to the fourth century A.D.

The five periods of Tamilian architecture–Pallava. Early Chola, Later Chola, Vijayanagar and Modern–each has its own characteristic type of sculpture. As in architecture too, the characteristics of one period develop gradually from those of the preceding one without any abrupt break. A steadily increasing conventionalism of form and elobaration of ornament are the main tendencies of this development.

The earliest metal images hailing from the Tamil country are a group of Vishnu images and the image of Vishapaharana from Kilappudanur. A marked feature of these images, which may be assigned to Pallava period is austere decoration.

The *kirita* (Vishnu's headdress) tends to be nearly cylindrical in the Pallava period, while it (kirita) in conical in the Chola period.

The *yajnopavita* in most of the images falls over the right arm and has a double-bell clasp. In the images of the Chola period it *(yajnopavita)* becomes rather sinewy. The *skandhamala* (shoulder tassel) which is not met with in the Pallava icons and early Chola icons, makes its appearance in the images of the late 10th century A.D. and becomes elaborate in images of the subsequent periods. The necklace *(hara)* which is simple in shape and invariably not more than one or two in number in Pallava and early Chola icons is also shown in an elaborate manner in later Chola images, sometimes with mango decoration. Similar differences in the treatment of *chhannavira, katisutra, udambandha, armlets,* bracelets and leg ornaments like *padasaras,* the variations

that are met with in the delineation of drapery, the shape of the weapons and the positions in which they are carried are taken to indicate the possible date of the icons.

In the Pallava icons the upper arms start from the elbows of the lower arms, while in the later images they start from the shoulders.

Physiognomical traits of the images are also taken into consideration for purposes of the chronological classification. For instance, the images of the Pallava period are natural in pose and moulding without much flexion, and have an oval shaped face, rounder limbs, flat nose, while the Chola images have a rather circular face with a somewhat sharp nose.

The front of the torso is almost flat in the Pallava period while, in the Chola period, it is somewhat more strongly moulded in front.

The images tend to become more formal and conventionalised in the Vijayanagar period. The face is usually some what expressionless with prominent nose and chin, the former sharply pointed, the latter vertically grooved. The abdomen is rounder than before and tends to droop forwards. The navel is often emphasised by horizontal and vertical rays. The rendering of these details and traits varied from region to region in the same age so much so that it is not easy to speak of an uniform style for any given time bracket.

The pride of the Chennai Museum, lies in its huge collection of metal images representing the figures of the deities of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain faiths. This huge collection of metal images have been built by acquiring them under the Treasure Trove Act.

The earliest specimen of the historical period, in the collection of the Museum, comes from Amaravati and consists of four Buddhist images, assignable to about 4th century A.D. Next comes a group of images of Vishapaharana from Kilappudanur, Natesa from Kuram, Somaskanda from

Tiruvalangadu and a group of small Vishnu images, assignable to about 8th-9th centuries A.D. Vishapaharana, a rare representation in metal, has the *yagnopavita* flowing over the right arm, a characteristic feature of early images. Kuram Natesa, is the only representation of *urdhvajanu* pose in metal. Mention may be made of the snake in the left hand instead of the usual *agni* commonly met with in Nataraja images. The small image of Somaskanda with a trident and skull in the lower hands, is the most remarkable bronze of the aspect in Tamil Nadu and it bears close resemblance to the Pallava sculptures.

The Rama group of Vadakkuppanaiyur and Srinivasa group for Sirupanaiyur, are the fine specimens of the tenth century A.D., so far known in metal.

Natesa from Tiruvalangadu, much admired by the world famous sculptor Rodin is dated to 11th Century A.D. Ardhanarisvara from Tiruvengadu dated to 11th Century A.D. with the help of an inscription in the temple, is the best specimen of the aspect yet known in metal. Mention may be made of Chandikesvara belonging to the same find assignable to 10th Century A.D. Venugopala from Chimakurti and Surya from Harischandrapuram dated 11th and 12th Centuries A.D. respectively deserve special mention. The Venugopala group is an example of a simple and characteristic specimen of this aspect belonging to Eastern Chalukayn work. The images of Surya are very rare. Vishnu with consorts from Konal assigned to 13th century A.D. represents him with only one pair of hands having the emblems placed on the lower hands. The image wears a lengthy ornament known as vanamala, a rare feature in South India bronzes.

Some of the bronzes representing the *alvars*, such as Tirumangai *Alvar*, and *nayanmars* such as Kannappanayanar, belong to the Vijayanagar period.

Mention may be made of a group of Buddhist bronzes from Nagapattinam, ranging from 9th Century A.D. to 17th Century A.D. A quite number of them bear dedicatory in-

scriptions on the pedestal. Some of the images like Maitreya, Avalokitesvara, Simhanada, Jambhala, Vasudhara and Tara are excellent specimens of South Indian bronze casting.

There are few interesting Jain metal images and they include the bronzes from Sivaganga, Singanikuppam and Harpanahalli. Mention may be made of the image of Mahavira surrounded by his twenty three predecessors from Harpanahalli and the inscribed Adinatha from Gidangal, South Arcot District.

Besides these, there are a few good example of bronzes made in the folk style and they come from Karappidagai and Naikuppam. They represent village deities like Karuppannaswami, Maduraiviran, etc.

The images in the Bronze Gallery are arranged according to various iconographic aspects. Facilities are also offered to scholars to study the reference collections on specific request. Photographs of the outstanding bronzes are available for sale. The catalogue of the Hindu Metal Images in the Chennai Museum a bulletin of this Museum, by F.H. Gravely and T.N. Ramachandran is the first scientific work focussing the attention of the scholars on the excellence attained by South India metal workers in their art.

BRAHMA

Brahma is the creator and the first member of the Hindu Trinity. Though Brahma is considered to be an important god, he is not held in such reverence as the other members of the Trinity. He is god of wisdom and the four Vedas are said to have sprung from his heads. He is also known by other names such as Visvakarman, Brahmanaspati, Hiranyagarbha, Prajapati, Pitamaha, etc.

Legends about the origin of his birth, are numerous:"Brahma was born in a golden egg, and was therefore known as Hiranyagarbha; he sprang from the waters and the ether; he took the form of a boar and lifted up the earth from the ocean; he took the *avatar* of a fish; he was born from the lotus that issued from the navel of Vishnu". *His importance in assisting Siva in killing three *asuras* and in officiating as a priest on the occasion of the marriage of Siva and Parvati *(Parvatikalyanam)* is well known. But in the epics **(the Mahabharata and the Ramayana)** and the Puranas when the tales of the cult gods Vishnu and Siva emphasise the greatness of the gods, Brahma's position becomes inferior and thus he becomes subservient to them. Thus he is pushed to a secondary place in the hierarchy of gods. The worship of Brahma has not been popular, since there is no Brahma cult as such like that of Vishnu or Siva. Though one of the niches of the first *prakara* of Vishnu and Siva temple is devoted to Brahma as a *parivaradevata*, there are very few temples exclusively devoted to Brahma.

Since Brahma's main role was creation, he had no incarnation or manifestations like the other two members of the Hindu Trinity. There are a large number of stone sculptures of Brahma as stated above, but there are very few metal icons. One such is the seated Brahma of the Chennai Museum and this is a processional diety *(utsavagigraha)*. Since he ceased to be a cult god and was worshipped as

* T.A. Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography Vol. II. Pt. P. 501.

a member of the Hindu Trinity rather than as an individual god, bronzes of Brahma are not very common.

The description of Brahma is elaborately given in all works of authority such as **Amsubhedagama, Suprabhedagama, Vishnupurana and Rupamandana.**

He is represented either standing or seated with four heads and two pairs of hands. The upper hands carry a rosary *(akshamala)* and a spouted vessel *(kamandalu)*, while the lower ones are in abhaya and varada poses. Sometimes his hands may carry grass *(kusa)*, two sacrificial pots *(sruk and sruva)* and the Vedas. The swan is the vehicle (vahana) for him as well as for his consort, Sarasvati.

According to **Vishnudharmottara** he is sometimes represented as riding on a chariot drawn by seven swans and according to **Rupamandana** he is represented with a beard. The representation of Brahma differs from region to region. In Central and Eastern India, he is represented as a youth. The sculptures from Bellary, Dharwar, Gujarat, Sopara, etc represent him with a beard like an old sage. This emphasises the *Pitamaha* (grandfather) aspect of the God. But in early sculptures from Badami-Aihole region, the beard is totally absent. The bronze figure of Brahma in the Karachi Museum is peculiar and unique in that it has only one pair of hands instead of four as required in the *Agamas*. In Bengal there are rare examples of bearded Brahma. He is shown as a pot bellied and dwarfish figure. But in South India, he is shown without a beard and his body contours are as slim as those of any other deity.

His consort, Sarasvati, the goddess of learning holds the vina, in her lower right hand and upper left hand, while the upper right carries a rosary *(akshamala)* and the lower left holds a book. Savitri, the tutelary diety of an important mantra is also associated with Brahma, being regarded as a second consort.

VISHNU

Vishnu is the second member of the Trinity and is conceived to be responsible for the protection of the Universe. He is an old Vedic god and is mentioned in all the four Vedas-**Rigveda, Yajurveda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda**. But he does not occupy a significant and important position in the Vedic mythology, but his character and status changed radically in later times. The most important exploit of Vishnu mentioned frequently in the Vedas is the taking of the famous three steps with which he is said to have measured the seven regions and covered the whole universe. "The three steps are said to represent the place of the sun's rising, its zenith and the place of its setting. Other versions suggest that they represent earth, air and heavens, for the first two steps were visible to men, whereas the third was hidden from them".* He is identified with the Sun and a host of other divinities. His solar identity becomes clear from the Vedic hymns. In the Brahmanas his position gradually attains a higher status. In the **Satapatha Brahmana**, he is included as one of the Adityas. The catalogue of the Adityas, varies but Vishnu finds a place in every list. In the **Mahabharata**, he is declared as the last Aditya (son of Aditi).

In the later period of the Ithihasas and Puranas he is worshipped as the supreme deity and occupies a preeminent position in the Hindu trinity. He is regarded as the "most influential" member of the Hindu Trinity.

Source materials for the study of the images of Vishnu are **Vaikhanasagama** and the **Pancharatragama** of which the latter consists of 108 samhitas.

He is represented as standing *(sthanakamurti)*, seated *(asanamurti)* or reclining (sayanamurti). He has four hands normally, of which the upper left carries a conch *(sankha)*. The lower right one is in the abhaya, while the left one may be in boon bestowing *(varada)* or in the form resting

* Veronica Ions, "Indian Mythology" London, 1967, P. 23.

upon the hip *(katyavalambita)*. Sometimes he holds a mace *(gada)*. He has two consorts, Sri Devi and Bhudevi, respectively the goddess of prosperity and the earth goddess. They are represented as standing or sitting on the right and left sides of Vishnu. Both of them have a pair of arms, while the one carries a flower, the other is hanging loose *(lola hasta)*. "Sri Devi is identified with Lakshmi, and she is worshipped independently as Mahalakshmi or Gajalakshmi, having two pairs of arms".

Vishnu is said to have become manifest to his devotees in different forms in different places and in each of these places he is worshipped in the form in which he is said to have appeared. Some of them being:

VARADARAJA (the king among boon–bestowers) of Kanchipuram, with his lower right hand in the boon bestowing attitude *(varada)*. The lower left rests on his hip (i.e.) *Katyavalambita*. His consorts accompany him.

SRINIVASA of Tirupati, with the lower right hand in the attitude of protection *(abhaya)*, while the lower left is placed against the thigh, suggesting that "the ocean of mundane activities *(samsara)* is only thigh deep to his devotees". His consorts accompany him.

PANDURANGA of Pandharpur, with only one pair of hands. They rest on the hips or hang beside his hips. The left one holds a conch, in the latter case.

RANGANATHA or Srirangam, reclining on serpent bed.

Vishnu is said to become incarnate to punish the wicked and protect the weak and helpless, whenever virtue wanes and vice predominates. "The term *avatara* (incarnation) is applied to the act of the god coming down in the form of a man or an animal to the earth and living there in that form till the purpose for which he had descended in the universe was fulfilled; it also sometimes denotes the assumption of different forms by the god for the attainment of particular objects". The most commonly accepted and

recognised incarnations of Vishnu are ten in number though certain late texts however fix the number at twenty-two, twenty-three or twenty-nine. The most popular form of Vishnu worshipped in the temples, generally refer to one of the ten incarnations. These ten incarnations *(avatars)* are: Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Narasimha (man-lion), Vamana (Dwarf) including Trivikarama, Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. Some do not consider Buddha to be an avatara and substitute Balarama in his place. It may be noted that the first four are half-human, and half-animal and the rest are in human form. Further it may be seen that in the first two incarnations (i.e.) Matsya and Kurma, the body is of animal form, while the head is of human form, Whereas in the third and fourth (i.e.) Varaha and Narasima, the head is of animal form and body is that of human form. The ten incarnations are detailed below.

Matsya:

In this incarnation, the upper portion is that of human with four hands and the lower one, of a fish. The upper hands hold the usual attributes, while the lower ones are in the abhaya and varada poses. The human half is decorated with all usual ornaments of Vishnu including the head-gear *(kiritamakuta)*.

It is said that at the end of least aeon *(kalpa)* when the earth became submerged under water a powerful demon, Hayagriva (different from that of the minor avatara of Vishnu) snatched away the Vedas from the creator (Brahma) and disappeared. Vishnu took the form of a fish and recovered the Vedas from the ocean.

References to this form of Vishnu are to be found in the **Bhagavatapurana**, the **Agnipurana** and the **Matsyapurana**.

This incarnation is represented in stone, painting and ivory but not in metal.

Kurma:

In this incarnation also the upper half is that of human while the lower half, of tortoise. As in the case of Matsya avatara, here also this image has four hands. The upper ones carry the usual emblems, while the lower ones are in abhaya and *varada*. The image is to be ornamented as in Matsya avatara and should have the kiritamakuta as its head-dress. The image may also be represented like a full tortoise.

It is said that once there was a struggle between the gods and demons for supremacy. The gods were in need of more strength and they wanted to take divine nectar *(amrta)* which could be got by churning the ocean of milk. The Mandara mountain was used as a churning stick, and Vishnu as tortoise served as the base to support the mountain.

Detailed descriptions of this incarnation are found in the **Bhagavatapurana**.

This representation is met with in stone, painting, wood, ivory, but not in metal.

Varaha:

In this incarnation, he is more often shown with a boar face only and a human body. He is represented as standing or seated, either with his consort, Bhudevi or alone. When standing alone his upper hands carry the usual attributes while the lower ones are placed on the hips. When standing with his consort, who is seated on his left leg which rests on a serpent hood his lower left hand embraces her. The lower right is in the *abhaya* pose. When seated with his consort on his left knee, he is in sukhasana posture, the other features being similar to the above standing form. Sometimes, he is seen with Lakshmi on his left lap, in which attitude he is known as Lakshmivaraha. He is called Varaha when alone, and Bhuvaraha when he is in the company of his consort, Bhudevi.

There are two main versions of this incarnation, but the most popular is that Vishnu took the form of a boar to lift the earth Goddess, when the entire universe had become one ocean.

This incarnation was very popular in early medieval days and there are numerous representations all over India, in both therianthropomorphic form and Zoomorphic form. The representation of Varaha at Mamallapuram and at Udayagiri are in therianthropomorphic form, while the sculpture of Varaha in Lucknow Museum is of Zoomorphic form.

References to this incarnation are found in the **Vishnupurana**, the **Lingapurana**, the **Garudapurana**, the **Vaikhanasangama**, the **Silparatna**, and the **Vishnudharmottara**.

This incarnation is well represented in stone, wood, painting and ivory are very rarely met with in metal.

Narasimha:

In this form he is represented with animal head and human body. He is shown as standing or sitting, either alone or with his consort. He is usually represented with two pairs of arms. In some forms he has more than two pairs of arms. When represented with more than two pairs of arms, various weapons are associated with the hands.

He is shown alone or with his consort, Lakshmi. When seated alone, with legs crossed in yogasana posture, he is known as Yoganarasimha. Here he is represented with only four arms, the upper hands carrying the usual emblems, and the lower hands being stretched out and bent to rest on knees. When he is shown in the company of his consort, Lakshmi, who is seated on his left lap is known as Lakshminarasimha. When he is represented as tearing Hiranyakasipu, either in stone or metal, he is shown with more than four arms.

It is said that Vishnu took the man-lion incarnation to kill the demon-king Harayakasipu because he had con-

demned his son Prahlada to death for worshipping Vishnu. This king had in his earlier life adored Brahma and secured boons from him that he would not be killed by god, man or beast, with any weapon during the day or night, inside or outside his house. Having obtained the boons, he became haughty and irrepressible for the gods. So Vishnu took the form of a manlion and tore him with is claws at the time of twilight, sitting on the door-sill of the residence of Hiranyakasipu. "The circumstances under which Hiranyakasipu had his death, fell outside the conditions of Brahma's boons, for the time was evening-neither day or night, the place was the doorway of the palace-not inside nor outside the demon's house and the assailant was a man-lion-neither man, beast nor god"

Brief account about this incarnation is found in the **Matsyapurana**, the **Padmapurana**, the **Vishnupurana**, the **Kurmapurana**, the **Vishnudharmottara** and the **Silparatna**.

This incarnation is profusely seen in metal and Pra hlada when represented is shown as standing in the anjali pose. In Tamil Nadu, Narasimha is very popular, the early representations being of Pallava date. He is represented in different ways in Tamil Nadu-Narasimha in action. Narasimha in meditation (Yoga Narasimha) and Narasimha with his spouse (Lakshminarasimha).

In early medieval representations of Narasimha in Tamil Nadu the lion-face is natural but later it is stylized.

Vamana (including Trivikrama):

He is represented as a dwarf with a pair of hands, a hunched back and protruding belly. He has on the crown of his head a small tuft of hair tied into a knot. A umbrella is associated with him. He carries a copy of the Vedas in his right hand and a spouted vessel *(kamandalu)* in his left hand. When he takes three strides he is known as Trivikrama, which means "the god who took three strides". In this form he has four or more arms, carrying the usual emblems of Vishnu, other arms being in the *abhaya* and

varada poses and holding a mace (*gada*) and a bow (*sarnga*). His right leg rests on the ground, while the left one is used for taking the stride of the world-measure. King Bali is represented in the anjali pose just below the left of Vishnu.

It is said that King Bali, with his powers acquired through religious penances, had driven Indra out of his kingdom. This pained Aditi, his mother and Vishnu, was requested to restore the celestial Kingdom to Indra. Accordingly Vishnu as Vamana (a young boy) came to Bali who was conducting a sacrifice, and begged him for some land as a gift. Bali accepted and promised to give whatever he wanted. Varmana asked for three paces of land, which was promised by the King. Immediately Vamana took the form of a gigantic figure and with one pace he measured the whole of the earth, and with the second step the entire mid-world between the earth and heaven. There was nothing left for measuring out the third pace, for which the King offered his head to stand on. He (Trivikrama) sent him by the pressure of his foot to the *patala-loka* (bottomless perdition). The worlds acquired from Bali were given to Indra.

The origin of this incarnation is "the three strides of Vishnu spoken of frequently in the **Rig Veda**. This is considered as his most important feat. The **Rig Veda** does not connect Vishnu with a dwarf in any way. The **Satapatha Brahmana** refers to "Vishnu the dwarfest among the gods". The epics and the **Puranas** elaborately refer to the dwarf incarnation. The **Harivamsa** includes the dwarf in the lists of incarnations.

The description of this incarnation is given in the works of authority such as the **Vaikhanasagama**, the **Silparatna**, the **Agnipurana**, the **Varahapurana**, and the **Rupamandana**.

Representations of this incarnation fall under two categories one the dwarf (Vamana) and "the other the huge colossus (Trivikrama) about to take three steps". Vamana is represented both in stone and metal while Trivikrama is

met with in stone in large numbers but none in metal except the one under worship in the temple at Singanallur in the Coimbatore District. He is represented with eight arms and in most representations his left leg is raised to measure the universe as seen from the sculptures at Mamallapuram, Badami and Ellora. In later medieval sculptures he is shown with four hands. But in the sculptures from Belur and Naggehalli (Hassan District), Trivikrama is represented, in consonance with the Silparatna, as standing on the left leg, which his right leg is raised.

Parasurama:

He is represented always with a pair of hands, carrying a bow and a battle axe. Some texts however describe him as a four armed deity in which case besides the battle axe *(parasu), sankha, chakra and gada* are associated with the other three hands. The **Agnipurana** describes him as four armed deity, and the attributes associated with him are *parasu* (battle axe), *khadga* (sword), *bana* (arrow) and *dhanus* (bow).

Vishnu took this mortal form in order to exterminate the Kshatriyas (warrior class) who were terrorising the gods and mankind. The story of Parasurama is told at length in the **Mahabharata** and in the **puranas**, such as the **Bhagavatapurana**,the **Vishnupurana** and the **Agnipurana**.

This form is not commonly met with in stone and metal images.

Rama:

Rama, the hero of the great epic Ramayana and his consort Sita are popularly worshipped from very early times. His images do not exhibit either the four arms of Vishnu or the distinguishing symbols of conch, discus, etc. Human in form, but god in essence, he is represented always as a royal personage of great beauty, having ornaments, etc. that indicate the high birth and noble character. He is generally represented as standing with his consort Sita on his right and Lakshmana on the left. Rama and

Lakshmana are represented as holding bow and arrow in the left and right hands respectively. It may be noted that the position of the hands are only shown. The head-dress of Rama and Lakshmana are *Kiritamakuta* and *Karandamakuta* respectively. Sita is an incarnation of Lakshmi with a lotus in the left hand, the right handing loose *(lola hasta)*. The hair on the head should be secured in an ornamental knot, known as *kesabandha* and occasionally she wears *karandamakuta*.

Description of this image is available in the **Vaikhansagama**, the **Agnipurana**, the **Vishnudharmottara** and the **Rupamandana**.

The story of Ramayana is popular and the heroic deeds of Rama are well known. Though the various episodes are represented in stone, painting, wood, etc., in metal images he is represented always as standing with a pair of arms and in the company of Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman or with Sita only.

Krishna:

He is the most popular of all the *avatars*. Among other deeds he destroyed a number of demons. His achievement have been so great and glorious, that among the incarnations of Vishnu, none receives more cordial or most widespread worship than Krishna.

He is generally represented as standing with or without his two consorts, Rukmini and Satyabhama, on his right and left respectively. They (the consorts) are regarded as incarnations of Sri Devi and Bhudevi respectively. Krishna is shown with a pair of hands. The right hand carries a peculiarly curved stick (probably the shepherd's hook) or is in the *kataka* pose, as if intended to receive the stick. The left hand is raised horizontally and bent at the elbow, as in the attitude of resting on the shoulders of Satyabhama. When represented with four hands, which is very rare, he carries the usual emblems of Vishnu in his upper hands. His head may be adorned with royal head-dress or

the hair may be tied up in an ornamental knot on the top of the head and be secured by wreaths of flowers. Rukmini holds a lotus flower in her left hand and Satyabhama holds a water lily in her right hand, while the other hand of each, hanges freely *(lola hasta)*. Sometimes instead of holding the flowers, the respective hands may be in the *kataka* pose. The hair of both Devis is tied up in an ornmental knot and secured by flowers or the head may be surrounded by royal head-dress.

The valorous deeds of Krishna, since childhood, including the circumstances under which he was born, are detailed in the **Mahabharata**. He bore several names, for having performed wonderful exploits and heroic deeds.

VATAPATRSAYI:

The divine baby is lying on a banyan leaf holding one of his toes in his mouth. It is said that in this form he is brooding over the ocean of the chaos caused after the destruction of the universe at the end of an aeon *(kalpa)*.

SANTANAGOPALA:

Same as Vatapatrasayi but without the banyan leaf.

YASODAKRISHNA:

He is represented as lying on the lap of his mother Yasoda, who is feeding him.

BALAKRISHNA:

He is represented as a crawling child. When he crawls his legs and hands rest on the ground. Sometimes he holds butter in one hand. His head-dress resembles that of a *kondai* fashion.

NAVANITAKRISHNA:

He is represented with the butter ball in his right hand as dancing with joy. His left leg slight bent at the knee joint, rests on the ground, while the right is lifted up

and bent inwards as in dancing. The left hand is stretched out fully.

KALIYAKRISHNA:

He is represented as dancing on the hood of Kaliya, the serpent king. His left hand hold the tail of the serpent while his right hand is in *abhaya* pose or outstretched so as to balance himself. The left leg is slightly bent and the foot is placed firmly on the hood of the serpent. The right leg is raised upwards and bent at the knee, suggesting that a kick on the hood is contemplated.

One of the episodes of Krishna mentions that Kaliya, the serpent king had his abode in a pond Kalindi in the river Yamuna. This serpent king gave trouble to cowherds and the cattle when they came to the pond to quench their thirst., Hence Krishna controlled the serpent king and drove him away to the river.

VENUGOAPALA:

He is represented as a young boy playing the flute to entertain his companions and cows. He is shown as standing erect with his left leg resting on the ground and the right leg bent at the knee goes across the left leg so as to touch the ground with the toes. Both the hands either hold the flute or are in the posture of holding it. In some cases he is represented with four hands in which case the upper hands hold the usual emblems. He wears a *kiritamakuta* or a bunch of peacock's feathers and is accompanied by his consorts, Rukmini and Satyabhama.

MADANAGOPALA:

He is represented as Venugopala with eight and ten arms.

PARTHASARATHI:

He is represented as the divine charioteer of Arjuna expounding the religious precepts contained in the Bhagavadgita.

GOVARDHANA:

He is represented as holding aloft the Govaradhana Hill and protecting the cowherds, cowherdesses and cows from heavy rains.

It is said that Krishna abolished the festival of Indra, and Indra, in consequence, poured down torrents of rain. Krishna uplifted the mountain Govardhana and gave shelter to the cowherds and others.

Krishna alone, among the *avatars* of Vishnu, is worshipped as a child, a boy and a youth.

"He has obtained such pre-eminence that his votaries look upon him not simply as an incarnation, but as a perfect manifestation of Vishnu"

"In a sense he is the real *avatara*, for according to the epic and puranic traditions, he came to live among men for the attainment of virtuous ends".

Representations of Vatapatrasayi, Yasodakrishna, Santanagopala, Balakrishna, Navanitakrishna, Kaliyakrishna, Venugopala and Krishna, as a shepered boy, are commonly seen in metal images.

BUDDHA:

He is represented as seated on a *padmasana* in *yogasana* posture and the hands in *dhyanamudra*.

This Buddha incarnation of Vishnu is never worshipped in Hindu temples.

Description of Buddha images is found in the **Brhatsamhita**, the **Agnipurana**, the **Vishnudharmottara** and the **Rupamandana**. The **Hayasirshasamhita** describes the Buddha as "Father of the world" *(Pitheva Jagatah)*

Buddha is replaced by Jagannatha in the North and sometimes by Balarama (Krishna's brother) finding a place in between Rama and Krishna. He is shown with a plough as his emblem. Balarama's importance as a cult deity is

proved by literary as well as archaeological data. The **Mahabhasya** and the **Brhatsamhita** refer to the description of the image of Balarama.

Sometimes he is shown as standing under a canopy of serpent hoods, holding a pestle *(musala)* and a plough *(hala)* in his hands. The worship of Balarama as an independent god is very rare in the South. Probably the glory of the younger brother Krishna had thrown the elder brother into shade. Occasionally he is worshipped in association with Parathasarathi.

KALKI:

This last *avatara* of Vishnu, has not yet taken place and is said to occur at the end of the present age Kaliyuga. He is to bring a period of virtue and prosperity by the final destruction of the wicked, the renovation of creation, and the restoration of purity. He is represented as riding on a horse with the face of a horse and the body of a man, with two or four hands. When having two hands he carries sword and shield. He may be along or in the company of one or more of his consorts. He may also be shown surrounded by other gods and sages. Sometimes he carries a bow and arrow. If the hands are four, the other two (upper ones) hold the conch and discus.

Descriptions of this *avatara* are available in the **Hayasirshasamhita**, the **Agnipurana**, the **Vishnudharmottara** and the **Rupamandana**.

Separate figures of this *avatara* are not known and he is seen as the last figure in the Dasavatara panels.

Besides the above incarnations, Vishnu has certain special forms and the most important among them are given below.

VAIKUNTANATHA:

Vishnu is represented as sitting on a serpent couch. His left hand rests on the couch and the right hand rests on his knee.

Different descriptions of this image are available in the texts.

LAKSHMINARAYANA:

As the name itself indicates, Vishnu, in the seated posture is in the company of his consort Lakshmi, who is on his left lap. The upper arms carry the usual attributes (i.e.) discus and conch. The lower right hand is in the *abhaya* pose, while the lower left embraces the consort.

Lakshmi's right hand is laid round the neck of her consort (Vishnu) and the left one holds a lotus. The standing images of Lakshminarayana are very few. In this representation, Lakshmi is shown standing on the left of Vishnu. The lower left arm of Vishnu is shown embracing his consort (Lakshmi) while Lakshmi's right hand embrances him (Vishnu). Detailed descriptions of this image are available in the **Padmasamhita** and the **Rupamandana**

Dhanvantari:

He is the tutelary deity of Hindu medicine. He is represented always as seated, with a pair of hands and in front of a disc, on which the discus and conch are seen. The right hand holds a vessel of medicine, while the left holds a bowl, with which the medicine is to be poured out

The **Vishnudharmottara** contains a description of the image of Dhanvantari, according to which he carries in both the hands vessel containing *amrta*, the ambrossia of the gods.

The forms of Vaikuntanatha, Lakshminarayana and Dhanvantari are commonly met with in metal icons.

In addition to the incarnations and special forms for certain purposes Vishnu assumed forms known as minor avatars. The chief among them are given below.

Dattatreya:

He is a combined incarnation of the Trimurti and attended by four dogs representing the four Vedas. He is portrayed in three forms. In the first form he is represented as the three gods standing or sitting side by side, but they have special emblems and vehicles. In the second form he is shown as Vishnu in *yogasana* posture, while his triple nature is indicated by the *lanchanas* (characteristic emblems) which are carved on the pedestal. The third form, which is commonly seen in wood, depicts Dattatreya as a human being with three heads, one of each god and attended by four dogs representing the four Vedas.

The origin of this minor *avatara* is an interesting one. Once there was a brahmin by name Kausika who had been suffering from leprosy. In spite of this, his wife was devoted to him. The sage Animandavya got annoyed with the leprous brahmin and so he cursed him (Kausika) to die at the next sunrise. Kausika's wife by her devotion and chastity ordered the sun not to rise. At the intervention of Anasuya (Atri's wife), she accepted to allow the sun to rise, subject to the condition that the curse of Kausika would not be effective. On being promised this, she allowed the sun to rise. The gods pleased at this granted her a boon that the three gods of the Trinity be born as her sons. Though Dattatreya was the incarnation of Vishnu, he is worshipped as a minor god, representing the Trinity in one.

In some texts like the **Vayupurana**, Dattatreya is regarded as one of the ten *avataras*. While the **Bhagavatapurana** fixes the number of *avataras* at 32, Dattatreya occupies sixth position. While the **Agnipurana** and the **Varahapurana** speak of the usual ten incarnations, the **Matsyapurana** mentions Dattatreya as one among the ten *avataras*.

According to the **Rupamandana**, Dattatreya is called as Harihara-Pitamaha. This shows evidently that Dattatreya is an incarnation of all the three deities of the Hindu Trinity though in a sense he is an incarnation of Vishnu.

Representation of Dattatreya is met with in stone and wood, but not in metal.

Hayagriva:

In this form Vishnu is represented with the head of a horse and the body of a human being. He has four hands, the upper ones carrying the usual emblems of Vishnu. The lower left holds a manuscript of the Vedas and the lower right is in the abhaya pose. In this form he is viewed as the God of Learning though he is worshipped mostly by a group of Vaishnavities only.

There are different stories about the origin of this minor *avatara* of Vishnu. The most common version is that Vishnu descended upon the earth in the form of Hayagriva to rescue the Vedas from two demons, *Madhu* and *Kaitabha*, who had stolen the while **Brahma** was asleep during the great Deluge.

Descriptions of this image are available in the **Padmasamhita** and in the **Vishnudharmottara.**

Representation of this image in metal is rare.

Vishnu has many attendants and chief among them are Ananta, Garuda, Vishvaksena and Hanuman.

Ananta:

He is the serpent serving as a couch for Vishnu. He may have one or five hoods.

Garuda:

He is the vehicle of Vishnu and a mythical kite (half-kite and half-man), He is represented as a man with a beak-like nose and two spreading wings. He is generally shown as standing or kneeling on one knee, the other leg being bent and firmly placed on the seat.

He has two hands, which are either in the *anjali* pose or outstretched with the palms turned upwards to receive the feet of of Vishnu who rides on his shoulders. He is

installed in every Vaishnavite temple opposite to the central shrine.

Descriptions of this image are available in the **Silparatna** and the **Sritatvanidhi**.

The figures of Garuda are commonly met with in stone and metal.

Vishvakesena:

He is the guardian deity of Vishnu temples. He is generally represented as seated with the right leg hanging down. He has four hands. The upper ones hold the emblems of Vishnu. The lower right hand is often in the *tarjani* pose, and the lower left either holds or rests on a mace. He is worshipped chiefly by the Vaishnavites always at the beginning of a ceremony to avoid obstacles. In this regard, it may be said Vishvaksena occupies a position in the Vaishnavite pantheon quite similar to that of Ganesa in the Saivite one.

His figures are generally met with in stone and metal.

Hanuman:

He is the monkey chief and great devotee of Vishnu, intimately connected with the Rama incarnation. He is represented either in the *anjali* pose or with the right hand in front of the mouth in token of his humble devotion. The left hand and the tail hang down freely.

His figures are commonly seen in stone and metal.

The Vaishnavite saints or *alvars*, who have been identified are twelve in number and they are always represented with a single pair of hands. Some of them are shown as seated or standing.

Poygaialvar, Bhutatalvar and Peyalvar:

They are represented as standing with the hands in the *anjali* pose. The knot of hair can be seen on the back.

They wear the sacred thread. It is difficult to distinguish them from one another.

Tirumalisaialvar:

He is represented as standing in the *anjali* pose. The knot of his hair can be seen in the front. He has no sacred thread.

Madhurakavialvar:

He is represented as standing with a pair of cymbals, one in each hand. The knot of his hair can be seen in the front. He wears the sacred thread.

Nammalvar:

He is represented always as seated in meditation with legs crossed. His right hand is either in the *jnana* or *upadesa* pose, indicating realization of the absolute and teaching respectively. He holds a palm-leaf manuscript in his left hand. He has no sacred thread. He wears a peculiar head dress, i.e., a small knot of hair on the top.

He is also called Satakopan and Maran.

Kulasekharalvar:

He is represented as standing with hands in the *anjali* pose. He wears a crown on his head indicating his kingly rank.

Periyalvar:

He is represented as standing with hands in the *anjali* pose and with a small tuft of hair on the crown of his head falling towards the forehead. He wears the sacred thread. Sometimes he carries a bell in each hand. He is also known as Vishnuchitta.

Andal:

She is represented as standing fully decorated as a bride. She holds a flower in her right hand and her left hand hangs freely.

Tondaradippodialvar:

He is represented as standing in the *anjali* pose and with a flower basket on one arm. He wears the sacred thread. His head always has a small tuft of hair in the front or in the centre.

Triuppanalvar:

He is represented as standing with cymbals in his hands. He has no sacred thread. There is a small tuft of hair in the centre of the head. In some cases he is shown as standing with hands in the *anjali* pose and a *tamburu* (stringed instrument) rests on his left shoulder.

Tirumangaialvar:

He is represented as standing with a sword in his right hand and a shield in his left hand. In some cases the position of the hands suggests holding of the above attributes. The hair on his head is tied into a knot at the centre. As a rule he is profusely ornamented. He wears no sacred thread.

Besides the above *alvars*, there are certain Vaishnavite *acharyas* or teachers, who are treated as saints and worshipped in Vaishnavite temples, along with the *alvars*. The most important among them are:

Ramanuja:

He is generally represented as seated with his hands folded in the *anjali* pose and a triple staff *(tridanda)* which rests on his shoulder. He lived in the 11th Century A.D.

Vedanta Desika:

He is another teacher who lived in the 14th Century A.D. He is shown always seated with a cudjan manuscript in the left hand. His right hand is in the *upadesa* pose. He wears a sacred thread.

The images of both the *acharyas* are met with in metal and stone in Vishnu temple.

The weapons and emblems of Vishnu, Siva and other gods are sometimes personified under the name of *ayudhapurushas*. They are also consecreted as images. The weapons and emblems that are personalified include *vajra, sakti, danda, khadga, pasa, ankusa, gada, trisula, padma, chakra and dhvaja*. Some of them are represented as males, some as females and some as enuchs.

Most important among Vishnu's *ayudhapursuhas*, are *chakra* and *gada*.

Chakra:

This is usually seen in the upper right hand of Vishnu. It is identified with *Kriyasakthi* (active aspect) as distinguished from *bhutisakthi* (material aspect). It may have four, six, eight, sixteen or thirty two arms and each is associated with a weapon. It is known as Sudarsanachakra and in Tamil it goes by the name Chakrattalvar. Sculputures in stone or metal of this are found in almost all the Vishnu temples, while in some there are separate shrines for Chakrattalvar as at Srirangam.

Sudarsana has the outline of a wheel with a figure of the fierce spirit of the discus in a standing posture within a hexagon formed by two interlacing equailateral triangles. He wears *kiritamakuta* surrounded by flames. Weapons such as bow, arrow, axe, sword, trident, noose, goad, thunderbolt, etc., are associated with Sundarsana. On the reverse is the figure of four armed Yoganarasimha on an equilateral triangle with its apex pointing upwards. The two upper hands carry the usual emblems of conch and discus, while the two lower hands are outstretched and rest on the knees. The figure on the observe has two projecting tusks. The Chakra in both of its forms is considered to be the destroyer of all enemies.

"Sudarsana came to be regarded as superior in power to even the *avataras*. Since they (avataras) constitute only a part of the deity's divine potency while Sudarasana symbolises Vishnu's power *(sakthi)* in its entirety".

Sudarsana was regarded as an independent deity, and not merely a subordinate agent of Vishnu's destructive power. There are several devotional hymns exclusively to Sudarsana, such as **Shodasayudhastotram, Sudarsanasatakam** and **Sudarasanashtakam**. There are separate shrines for Sudarsana in some temples like Srirangam and Kanchipuram.

"Although he is often depicted as of ferocious mein, to the true devotee he offers succour. To him, a pious devotee may go in search of his benediction, and by offering him special honours, may gain wealth, relief from disease and other benefits"

Elaborate description of this image is found in the **Parasarasamhita**, the **Isvarasamhita** and the **Silparatna**.

In some cases, Chakra when personified, is represented as a figure with a pair of hands in the *anjali* pose and having the *chakra* fitted on the head, like the one displayed in the Chennai Museum.

Gada:

The mace, which is associated with Vishnu in his lower left hand, when personified is known as Kaumodaki. He is represented as a standing figure with a pair of hands in the *anjali* pose and having the mace fitted on the head, like the one displayed in the Chennai Museum.

The representation of both the *ayudhapurushas* is very rarely met with in metal.

Representation of Vishnu's feet, Sripada and sandals mounted on lotus pedestal are the important objects of worship in Vaishnavite temples. When sandals are provided with a many-tired pedestal, it is known as Sathari. It is said to represent the spirit of Nammalvar. This can be seen in all Vishnu temples where it is placed on the head of the devotees.

Manmatha and Arjuna, are considered to belong to the Vishnu group of images and they are described below:

Manmatha:

He is identified with Pradyumna, one of the *vyuhas* of Vishnu. He has a pair of hands, the left one holding the bow of sugar-cane and the right having five flowery arrows. In some cases, the bow is floral (hence he is called Pushpadhanva). Sometimes his left hand is shown as resting on the shoulders of his consort Rati who holds a lotus or a mirror in one hand and the other is shown hanging down.

Detailed description of this image is found in the **Silparatna** and in the **Vishnudharmottara**. According to the **Vishnu-dharmottara**, Manmatha is described as having eight hands, four of which are to hold *sankha*, *chakra*, *dhanus*, and *bana*, while the other four hands rest on the bosoms of his four consorts, Rati, Priti, Sakti, and Mada-Sakti.

Sometimes he is represented as a handsome youth riding on a parrot. He has the emblem of fish and his banner (hence he is known as Makara-Ketu).

Images of Manmatha and Rati are available in stone and metal.

Arjuna:

He is one of the five Pandava princes. He is usually shown along with Krishna (Parathasarathi). He is also represented independently standing with an arrow in his right hand and a bow, called Gandipa, in his left. He wears many ornaments including a royal head-dress.

Representations of Arjuna are found generally in stone and rarely in metal.

SIVA

Siva is the third member of the Hindu Trinity. The word 'Siva' meanings "the auspicious" occurs as an epithet of Rudra in the early Vedic literature. It is Rudra, and not Siva, who is praised in all Vedic hymns. He oc-

cupies a supreme position among deities and is described as the Destroyer. Various accounts of birth of Rudra-Siva are given in the Puranas. He has many names, besides Rudra and Siva, such as Maheswara, Dhurjati, Trinetra, Nilakantha, Sambhu, Sankara, Pasupathi, Mahesa and Mahadeva.

"The Vedic gods, Rudra (a fierce, destructive figure with an unpredictable nature), and certain aspects of Agni (the god of fire) and prajapati (Creator-deity) are amalgamated with the later Siva".

He is worshipped in the form of Phallus or *linga*. Phallic worship has been referred to in the **Rigveda**, where it is known as Sisnadeva. **Markandeya Purana, Bhagavata Purana, Linga Purana, Vishnu Purana,** etc., speak of the worship of Siva in detail. The *linga* is generally fixed in a circular or quadrangular receptacle on a pedestal known as *yoni* or *Pariottam* or *Avudayar*, the surface of which is fashioned in such a way as to drain off the water poured over the god during bathing. It is a common adage that Siva is as fond of bathing as Vishnu is fond of decoration.

Images of Siva are also worshipped. He is represented as seated, standing and dancing. He carries an axe (parasu) and an antelope *(mrga)* in his upper hands, while the lower ones are in the *abhaya* and varada poses. In the North, the trident is often seen. Other emblems that are generally attributed to Siva are: kettle-drum *(udukkai)*, skull cup and various weapons of war. His matted hair is made up in the form of a head-dress called *jatamakuta*, showing the crescent moon, skull, snake and flowers. He has three eyes (hence known as Trinetra), the third one being situated on the forehead. He is usually represented with ear-ornaments inserted in the lobe of the ears. He is adorned like Vishnu with usual ornaments, viz. necklace, girdle, armlets, anklets etc.

Parvati or Uma or Gauri, as she is otherwise called, accompanies Siva as his only consort. She is represented, when she is with him (Siva) as standing or sitting to his

left with two hands, the right one holding a blue lily and the left one handing down loose *(lola hasta)*. Her hand is decorated with a *Karandamakuta* (a head-dress looking like a number of inverted pots arranged one over the other) and sometimes with a royal head-dress, known as *kesabandha*. When represented alone, She is always seated and has two pairs of hands. The upper ones hold an axe *(parasu)* and a noose *(pasa)*, while the lower ones are in the *abhaya* and *varada* poses. Siva's vehicle is the bull and that of Parvati is the lion.

Siva has two main aspects and they are benign and terrific. Each aspect has many forms some of which are taken for a particular purpose. In the majority of cases the purpose was as in the case of Vishnu, to punish the wicked and protect the weak and bless the devotees.

Representation of Siva, as standing or seated, either alone or with his consort; as a teacher of music and as a philosopher (Dakshinamurthi) as a boon-bestower (Anugrahamurti); and as a master of dance (Nrittamurti) are known as pacific aspects, while the representations in terrific aspects are known as Samharamurtis.

The most important benign forms are described below:-

Sukhasana:

When Siva is seated alone, he is known as Sukhasana. The image should be erect. His left leg is bent and rests on the seat, while the right leg hangs down.

The **Purva-karangama** states that the right leg of the image should be bent and be resting upon the seat and the left one hanging.

The upper hands hold the axe and the antelope, while the lower hands are in *abhaya* and *varada* or *simhakarna*. It is imperative that neither Devi or Skanda should be near Sukhasanamurti.

Detailed description of the image is given in the **Silparatna** and the **Purva-karanagama**.

This representation is commonly met with in metal images.

Chandrasekhara:

He is represented as standing erect without any bends in his body, that is in the attitude known as *samabhanga*. He has two pairs of hands. The upper ones hold the usual emblems and the lower ones are in *abhaya* and *varada*. The crescent moon should be conspicuous in his *jatamakuta*.

This aspect is also known as Kevalachandrasekhara.

Description of this image is found in the **Amsumadbhedagama** and the **Uttarakamikagama**.

Representation of this aspect is met with in metal images.

Pradoshamurti:

In this aspect Chandrasekhara is represented as standing and leaning towards Parvati. The upper hands hold the usual emblems, axe and antelope. The left hand embraces his consort and the lower right is in *abhaya*. Parvati holds a flower in her right hand while the left hangs down. In some representations Parvati is shown as embracing Siva round his waist.

This representation is very popular in metal and can be seen in almost all temples. The name Pradoshamurti is given to this aspect, because such images are taken in procession within the temple premises on *pradosha* days, i.e. two days before the full moon.

Detailed description of this image is available in the **Sritatva-nidhi**.

This representation is also known as Alingana-chandrasekhara.

Umamahesvara:

Siva is represented as seated with Parvati (Uma) on his left lap. The usual emblems are represented. The lower left arm of Siva embraces his consort. In some cases, the right arm of Parvati is shown as embracing Siva.

"In all the other forms of images representing Siva and Parvati together, the former only is significant to the worshiper. In Umamahesvara alone, among Siva images, as in Saktiganapati among other combined images, both figures have equal significance. Umamahesvara can only be worshipped by husband and wife together and the officiating priest must be accompanied by his wife who shares whatever he receives".*

The **Vishnudharmottara** and the **Rupamandana** gives elaborate description of this theme.

Representation of this aspect is commonly met with in stone but rarely in metal.

Umasahita:

Siva is represented as standing or seated with Parvati (Uma) beside him, either on the same pedestal or on a separate one. Siva's upper hands hold the usual emblems and the lower hands are in *abhaya* and *varada* poses. Devi's right hand is shown holding a flower or in the Kataka pose. Her left hand is in *varada* or resting on the seat.

Elaborate description of this theme is available in the **Silparatna** and the **Purva-karangama**.

This aspect is commonly seen in metal images, in standing or seated postures.

Somaskanda:

In this aspect Siva is seated with Uma (Parvati) on his left and their son Subrahmanya (Skanda) in between

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* F.H. Gravely and T.N. Ramachandran, Catalogue of the Hindu Metal Images in the Chennai Government Museum 1932, p. 11 n.

them on the same pedestal. The upper hands of Siva hold the usual emblems (axe and antelope) while the lower right is in *abhaya* and the lower left is either in *varada* or *simhakarna*. Devi's right hand is in *kataka* and the left one rests on the seat or is held in *varada*. Skanda is represented as a child standing, sitting or dancing between his parents and holding a lotus flower in both hands. Sometimes the right hand holds a lotus flower and the left hand hangs loose. In some cases, the left hand is held in *varada* or *simhakarna* and the right hand carries a book. When dancing, the left hand holds a fruit and the right is in *suchi* or the left hand might be kept stretched out and be without the fruit in it. When seated Skanda is found in between Siva and Uma or sometimes on the lap of Uma. Skanda is usually adorned with a *karandamakuta* on his head and other ornaments. He wears a *channavira*.

The **Silparatna** and the **Uttara-Kamikagama** have elaborate description of this theme.

This representation is commonly seen in metal images.

Kalyanasundara:

He is represented as a bride-groom, standing and holding the right hand of Parvati. Sometimes his lower right hand is shown stretching to receive the right hand of Parvati. Parvati stands either to his left or to his right with her head slightly bent down in shyness. Her left hand either holds a flower or hangs loose. In some compositions Vishnu, who gives Parvati in marriage, is seen standing, and pouring water over the hands (right hands of Siva and Parvati) from a spouted vessel which is held in his lower right hand. Vishnu in his upper hands holds the usual emblems, while the lower left hand is in the *katyavalambita* pose.

This aspect is also known as Vaivahikamurti or Sivavivahamurti.

The earliest reference to this iconographic form is found in the **Satarudriya** of the **Yajurveda**, wherein the epithet *pratisaryaya* refers to Siva as a bride-groom wearing the marriage string, *pratisara*.

Detailed description of this aspect including the individual figures are given elaborately in the **Amsumadbhedagama** the **Uttarakamikagama** and the **Purvakaranagama**.

Representation of this form (i.e) the marriage of Siva and Parvati, which is a favourite theme of the ancient Indian artists, are largely found in stone. In metal the figures of Siva and Parvati only are generally represented, whereas the occurrence of this aspect along with Vishnu and Sridevi is very rare, like the one on display in the Art Gallery at Thanjavur.

Gangadhara:

He is represented as standing, holding a trident obliquely across his back. He is seen supporting the river Ganga in her descent to earth. When accompanied by Parvati, he is shown as embracing her with his lower right arm, consoling and assuring her that his affection would not be transferred to the river-goddess. His lower right arm is either held in the *abhaya* pose or is placed near the chin of Parvati. His upper right arm holds up a lock of his matted hair *(jata)* on which is seen the river goddess, Ganga. Sometimes, it (right arm) may hold the axe and touch the lock of matted hair. Parvathi stands to his left in a state of mental uneasiness, the uneasiness being due to jealousy on finding her Lord supporting on his matted hair a woman, viz, Ganga. Her (Parvathi) right hand hangs down freely while her left holds a flower or is in the kataka pose.

When Gangadhara is shown without her, his lower right hand either rests on the bull against which he leans, or held in the *abhaya* or *varada* pose, while his left rests on his waist or is in the varada pose.

This aspect illustrates the story of the descent of Ganga for the sake of Bhagiratha. Siva accepted to receive Ganga on his matted locks so as to prevent the force of the fall of Ganga, failing which the fall would cause heavy damage to the earth. He (Siva) received her (Ganga) on his right matted locks and hence became known as Gangadhara. When she came down with great force, Siva wanted to humble her and made her stay for sometime in his hair. When requested by Bhagiratha, he (Siva) released her (Ganga) and hence he is known as Gangavisarjananurthi.

The earliest references to this aspect is available in the Satarudriya of the Yajurveda. Here the epithet used is *jalamaya* and it indicates "the mighty sheet of water on his (Siva's) head in the stream of Ganga with her waves and rapids flow and eddies of still water".

Detailed descriptions are available in the Amsumadbhedagama, the Kamikagama and the Karanagama.

This theme is popular in stone sculptures, where Bhagiratha and others are also represented along with Siva and Parvathi. But in metal, only Siva and Parvati are represented. Sometimes Siva alone is shown as supporting the trident with his upper hands, while the lower ones are in the *abhaya* and *varada* pose.

Vishapaharana:

He is represented as seated and in his upper hands he holds the usual emblems, ie., axe and antelope, while his lower left is shown holding a cup and the lower right is in the *varada* pose. Sometimes the lower right is shown holding a snake. In some bronzes, Parvati is represented as preventing the Lord from swallowing the poison. When Parvati prevented him from swallowing the poison, it (poison) got held up in the neck portion and his neck became blue. Hence he is known as Nilakantha, a more popular form than Vishapaharana but less suitable as the subject of a metal image.

This aspect of Siva tells that he swallowed the deadly poison, Kalakuta, that emerged from the milky ocean, when it was churned by the Devas and the Asuras, for obtaining ambrosia *(amtra)* from it. By swallowing cheerfully the poison "mercifully he could save three worlds from destruction". Hence this aspect is considered a kind of *anugrahamurti*.

This aspect is referred to in the Satarudriya of the Yajurveda in the epithets: Sitikantha and Nilagriva (i.e) bluenecked.

Detailed description of this image is available in the Karangama.

Though this aspect was popular, it is rarely represented in metal, like the one from Kilappudanur, Thanjavur Dt., now on show in the Chennai Museum. In this image Siva holds Kalakuta poison in his lower right arm while he holds a snake in the lower left.

Ardhanarisvara:

As the name itself indicates, in this form Siva is represented as half-male and half-female, typifying the male and female energies. The right half represents Siva and the left Parvati. The male half (Siva) is to have a *jatamakuta* with a crescent moon. He may have three or four arms. If there are three hands, the lower right rests on the back of the bull and in the upper right he holds an axe. When represented with four hands, he holds an axe in the upper right hand while the lower right is in the *kataka* pose. In the upper left hand he holds a waterlily and in the lower left he holds a parrot. The whole of the right side (male side) is adorned with ornaments peculiar to Siva and is shown with drapery upto the knee. The right leg is bent and rests on the pedestal.

On the left side (female side), the image had a *karandamakuta*. On the forehead of the left half, is seen a mark contiguous with the half eye of Siva. The left half of the image is shown with drapery upto the anklets.

Pravati's leg may be either slightly bent and resting on the pedestal or erect.

There are several stories accounting for this form. The popular account, as given in the Siva-Purana, is that Brahma created male beings and instructed them in turn to create others, but they were unable to do so. When Siva appeared before him in this Ardhanarisvara form, Brahma realised the omission and created females. Another account says that the sage Bhmgi vowed to worship only one deity (i.e.) Siva and he neglected to circumambulate Paravati, when he went to Siva, who was seated with Parvati also, on the Kailasa mountain. Parvati tried to force him to do so by asking to be united with her Lord, but the sage assumed the form of a beetle, pierced a hole through the composite body of Siva circumambulated Siva alone, whereupon Parvati became reconciled and blessed the sage Bhmgi.

This form is to signify, that the male and female principles are inseparable in the universe and are always found together.

This aspect is referred to as Soma (i.e.) Siva with Uma, in the **Satarudriya** of the **Yajurveda**.

Description of the image is given in the **Amsumadbhedagama**, the **Kamikagama** and a few other works.

Representation of Ardhanarisvara is more popular in stone sculptures, beginning from the Pallava period, while the same is very rare in metal, like the one from Tiruvenkadu now on show in the Chennai Museum.

Vrishavahana:

In this aspect Siva is represented as standing with a single pair of hands, the right resting on the head of his vehicle Nandi (this posture being shown only in some cases), and the left being in the *Katyavalambita* pose. Parvati is shown on the left side of Siva. In some cases he is

represented as riding on the bull. This aspect is also known as Vrishabhantika.

This representation is commonly seen in stone-sculptures and a few are met with in metal images.

Harihara:

In this form Siva is combined with Vishnu. In his upper right hand he carries Siva's axe, while in the upper left he holds Vishnu's conch. The lower left is shown in the *abhaya* pose, where as the lower right is in the *varada* pose. On the head-dress the Vishnu half is to have a *kiritamakuta*, while the Siva half, a *jatamakuta*. Both the aspects must be erect. On the forehead of the right half (Siva), the third eye is half visible.

Relating the origin of this aspect of the deity, it is related in the **Vamanapurana** that "Vishnu is reported to have said to a *rishi* that he and Siva were one and that in him resides Siva also and manifested himself to the *rishi* in this dual aspect of his. In the Ardhanarisvara form the left half is occupied by the Devi or Prakrti and Purusha, and Purusha and Prakrti are united with each other for the purpose of generating the Universe". It is necessary in this connection to draw the attention of the readers to the fact that Durga, the consort of Siva, is represented in all sculptures with *sankha* and *chakra*; the weapons of Vishnu. In one instance she is also called the sister of Vishnu. Vishnu is also viewed as the *Prakrtitatva* and hence we see Vishnu substituted in the place occupied by Devi in the Ardhanarisvara aspect of Siva.

An epithet *sipivishtaya* occurs in the **Satarudriya** and this links Siva and vishnu and this is the forerunner of the later Harihara form.

After giving the description of this concept, the **Vishnudharmottara** mentions that to the left of the figure of Harihara there should be sculptured Garuda and to the right of Nandi.

According to **Hayasirshasamhita**, the consort of Siva and Vishnu find a place in the respective sides.

This aspect is also known as Haryardhamurti.

Though this aspect is popular in stone sculpture, it is rare metal.

As stated earlier, Siva is the great teacher of *yoga*, music, *jnana* (Knowledge) and great exponent of other *sastras* and in these aspect he is known respectively as Yoga Dakshinamurti, Vinadhara Dakshinamurti (simply called Vinadhara), Jnana Dakshinamurti and Vyakhyana Dakshinamurti. As Siva is seated in this aspect facing south, he is known as Dakshinamurti.

"The great Sankaracharya, among several other celebrities, have sung the praise of this aspect of Siva, which is as remarkable for its peacefulness as the Nrttamurti is for joyfulness".

Yoga Dakshinamurti:

Siva is represented as seated with his left leg resting on the seat and the right leg hanging down from the seat. In his upper hands he carries a rosary *(akshamala)* and a flower. The lower right hand is held near the chest in the *yogamudra* pose, while the left hand rests on the lap.

Vinadhara:

He is represented both as seated and standing. When seated, the *vina* is supposed to rest on the right thigh. He holds the *vina*, in the lower hands while in the upper ones he carries the usual emblems, rosary and fire or rosary and snake. In metal images he is always represented as a standing figure. His lower hands are always in the attitude of holding the instrument. In all the metal images, a separately cast *vina* is intended to be provided in the hands as and when required and hence this instrument is not to be seen in the images. His upper hands carry the axe and the antelope. His right leg is kept firmly on the ground, while his left leg slightly bent, is placed a little forward.

He is also known as Vinadharadakshinamurti and he is popular in South Indian sculptures. In sculptures, from the Chalukyan area, Vinadhara Siva is shown seated in the Saptamatrka group. In Bengal, in some representations of Natesa, he is shown dancing on the bull, with the *vina* in one of his many pairs of arms. This is the Vinadhara-cum-Natesa of Bengal.

Thus Siva in this theme as seated, standing and dancing all the time carrying a *vina* shows the popularity of the Vinadhara aspect of the god.

Jnana Dakshinamurti:

He is represetned as seated with the rosary and the flower in the upper hands. The lower right is in the *jnanamudra* pose, while the lower left is in the *abhaya* or *danda* pose.

Vyakhyana Dakshinamurti:

He is represented as seated with his right leg hanging down below the seat and the left leg bent and resting across on the right thigh. In upper right hand he carries the rosary and in the upper left he carries the *agni* (fire). The lower right is in the *upadesa* pose and the lower left holds the Vedas.

In this aspect he closely resembles the Narayana form of Vishnu as may be seen in Gupta sculpture where two deers and a snake are shown at his feet, his right hand being in the *vyakhyana-mudra* or teaching attitude. These characteristics are found in the Pallava sculptures of Dakshina-murti, but the deer and snake disappear in the Chola sculptures, where only old sages listen to the young teacher, crushing ignorance in the dwarf beneath his feet.

Like other forms such as Bhikshatanamurti, Kankalamurti and Somaskanda, Dakshinamurti form is more or less confined to South India.

The **Karanagama** the **Sliparatna**, and a few other *agama* literature give an elaborate description of this aspect.

Except Vinadhara Dakshinamurti, the other three aspects ie., Yoga Dakshinamurti, Jnana Dakshinamurti and Vyakhyana Dakshinamurti are commonly represented in stone than in metal. Of these the Vyakhyana-dakshinamurti form is the one which is most frequently met with in temples. Vinadhara finds more representation in bronze than other aspects.

Siva as bestower of boons, has granted boons on certain occasions, on his devotees when pleased. The representation of such acts as grace in sculptures are known as *anugrahamurtis*. There are several such acts of grace and the most important among them are: Chandesanugrahamurti, Vishnuanugrahamurti, Kiratamurti and Ravananugrahamurti. These representations related to the events concerning Chandesa. Vishnu, Arjuna and Ravana respectively. Among the above only that of Kiratamurti is represented in metal whereas sculptural compositions of other acts of grace in stone are commonly seen.

Nateśa:

Among the aspects of Siva, the dancing form in *anandatandava* is the most famous and popular is South India, and the usual features are: the right leg of the god is placed on the back of a demon called *muyalagan* or Apasmara and the left raised and in the upper right hand he holds a kettle-drum or *udukkai* as it is called in Tamil and in the upper left hand he carries a fire-pot *(agni)*. The lower right hand is held in the *abhaya* pose, the wrist being encircled by a serpent while the lower left is bent across to the right side in the position known as *gajahasta* or the elephant trunk, its fingers pointing below towards the left leg which is raised, in a dancing position. An ornament fashioned like peacock's feathers and exhibiting a head encircled by a snake adorns the head. Ganga and the crescent moon are seen on the locks. The ecstatic and violent nature of the dance described as *anandatandava* in the sequel, whirling quickly round on one leg is indicated by the matted hair stretching out on both sides of the head in wavy lines and by the cloth tied round the waist also flying in the air. The

right leg wears a *bhringipada*, a jewel peculiar to Nataraja alone.

There are many and varied legends explaining the origin of the dance of Siva. But the most popular is that Siva danced to quell the pride of Kali.

"The dance, in fact, represents his five activities *(Panchakritya)* (i.e) Srishti (overlooking, creation, evolution) Sthithi (preservation, support). Samhara (destruction, evolution), Tirobhava (veiling, embodiment, illusion and also giving rest), Anugraha (release, salvation, grace). These separately considered, as the activities of the deities Brahma. Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesvara and Sadasiva". This cosmic activity is the central motif of the dance. "Creation arises from the drum *(udukkai)*, protection proceeds from the hand of hope, from fire proceeds destruction; the foot held aloft gives *mukti*. Here the mukti is the same as *anugraha*, release. The fourth hand points to this lifted foot, the refuge of the soul."

Satarudriya mentions the dance hall as Sabha and Natesa is referred to as sabhapati, lord of the dance hall. In all major Siva temples, a separate shrine is allotted to Nataraja, which is known as Natana-Sabha.

The **Amsumadbhedagama**, the **Uttara Kamikagama** and host of other *agama* literature throw a good light on the Nataraja images.

Bharatha's Natya Sastra, the authoritative book of Hindu Drama and Dance speaks of 108 kinds of dance of Siva and the Siva agamas mention that Siva performed 108 poses and dances. Perhaps the 108 dances referred to in Bharatha's Natya Sastra are identical with 108 modes mentioned in the Saiva agamas. Further it is said that 108 varieties of dance were performed by Siva at different places and on different occasions. Most of the modes are depicted in Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur and in the gopuras of the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram.

As stated earlier, the *anandatandava* Nataraja is popular in South India. *Chatura* and *lalita* mode of dances are rarely met with in South India, like the Tiruvarangulam Natesa (now in the National Museum, New Delhi) and the Natesas in the temples under worship at Nallur, Kodumudi etc.

But all of them are shown dancing on the Apasmara dwarf, a constant feature in South India sculptures. In Tamil sculptures the lower pedestal *(padmasana)* occurs as a circular or oval in shape, supporting the dwarf. In the North Indian tradition the dance of Siva is represented as dancing on the back of the bull, and with multiple arms like the one at Melakkadambur. Sometimes he dances with the bull beside him. Yet in another case, he (Siva) is represented not only as dancing on the bull but sometimes as carrying the *vina* as the presiding deity over music.

"The form of Natesa, thus betrays distinctive differentiate in different geographical areas, dancing on the Apasmara dwarf in South India, dancing multi armed in the *chatura* or *lalita* pose on the ground on lotus-pedestal, sometimes with the bull beside him, in the central area, and dancing, multi-armed, in the *chatura* or *lalita* pose, on the bull in the eastern school".

Both the words Natesa and Nataraja are synonyms. When his dance is viewed as a cosmic one, he is known as Natesa, meaning "Lord of Dances" and when it is viewed as a classical one, he is known as Nataraja meaning "King of Dances".

Parvati, when associated with Natesa images, is known as Sivakamasundari.

Representations of Siva as dancing are largely available in stone and metal.

In the terrible aspect, Siva is represented generally standing and having four hands or more. In this aspect "he is known by several names, each one indicating the destruc-

tion of a particular malevolent and troublesome demonical being".

These forms were taken by Siva for punishing the wicked and protecting his devotees.

Bhikshatanamurti:

Siva is represetned as a beggar moving about naked to expiate the sin of cutting off the head of Brahma. He (Siva) holds a kettle-drum *(udukkai)* in his upper right hand and in the left he holds a trident. His lower right hand stretched downwards touches the mouth of an antelope, while the left hand holds a *kapala* (Brahma's skull). The matted locks on his head may be either dishevelled or secured in the form of a circle with the crescent moon on it. In the place of a waist-belt, there is usually a snake coiled round the waist. He wears sandals. Sometimes a *bhuta* (goblin) stands on his left with a begging bowl on his head. THe *bhringipada*, a kind of jewel (anklet) which is peculiar to Nateasa adorns his (Siva) right foot and this bears no *agamic* evidence.

This aspect relates to an incident when Siva and Brahma had a heated argument, each claiming supremacy over the other. When Brahma remained obstinate in his stand, Siva getting angry cut off the fifth head (the head which reviled Siva) to Brahma. To expiate the sin of having killed Brahma (the sin being called *brahmahatya)* he was asked to go about begging for his food with the very skull of the head he had severed. He went from place to place for his food without garments.

There is a diffeent account given in the **Lingapurana** according to which it is said that Siva took this aspect to make the women and children in the forest, feel the need of the worldly ways, since they (women and children) took the performance of austerities and forget the worldly ways of living *(pravrthimarga)*.

The earliest reference to this aspect can be had from the **Satarudriya**, in the epithet *annanam patuye* (ie.) the Lord of food.

The **Amsumadbheda**, the **Kamika** and the **Karanagamas** contain detailed description of this image.

The aspect of Bhikshatana is commonly seen in the stone and metal.

Kankalamurti:

This aspect is closely allied to Bhikshatanamurti and almost similar in appearance. He is represented as standing with two pairs of hands. In the lower left hand he holds a kettle-drum, which is beaten by a stick held in corresponding right. In the upper left hand he holds the *kankala-danda* or the staff on which the bones of the murdered person are tied up an ornamented with peacock feathers. The upper right hand is stretched out and it is held in the *kataka* pose, near the mouth of his pet animal, deer. A number of snake ornaments are distributed all over the body. He wears sandals on feet and he is draped.

A goblin *(bhutagana)* stands on the left of Siva with a large vessel on his head for storing the food received in alms.

To expiate the sin of having killed Brahma, Siva went to Vishnu to get his sin wiped out. But at the gate, he was stopped by Vishvaksena, the gate-kepper. During the fight that ensued between them, Vishvaksena was killed and his body was fixed in the trident, with which Siva met Vishnu. Vishnu advised him to go to Varanasi, where his sin would be washed away.

The **Amsumadbhedagama**, the **Kamika** and the **Karanagamas** contain detailed description of this image.

The **Suprabhedagama** adds that the *kapala* held by Siva (Bhikshatana) is that of Brahma and the *kankala* that of Vishnu (in the case of Kankalamurti). Thus "the puranic

story of the murder by Siva of both Brahma and Vishwaksena, an aspect of Vishnu, is accepted and followed".

A number of examples of this representation are available in stone and a few in metal.

Like Somaskanda form, the form of Bhikshatanamurti and Kankalamurti are confined to South India.

Bhairava:

Siva in this aspect is represented as the protector of universe. He is shown as naked usually with four hands and sometimes with eight or ten. In the upper right hand he holds a Kettle-drum and in the upper left he holds a noose, while in the lower right hand a trident is held and in the lower left hand he holds a cup or skull or a sword. When depicted with more hands, he is shown with destructive weapons and in the *abhaya* and *varada* positions. His matted hair is dishevelled in the shape of *jvalakesa* adorned with a garland and skulls and snakes for ornaments. The dog on which he usually rides stands behind him.

This aspect relates to the incident when Siva assumed the form of Bhairava to cut off the fifth head of Brahma, which reviled Siva with haughtiness of disrespect.

"Bhairava is sometimes described as Brahmasiraschedakamurti (of Siva) in some of the Puranas and Saiva Agamas". "The Agamic texts enumerate as many as sixty-four Bhairavas divided in eight groups of eight each. The leaders of these group being Asitanga. Rura, Chanda, Krodha, Unmatha-Bhairava, Kapala, Bhishana and Samhara respectively".

Bhairava is so called because he protects the universe *(bharana)* and because he is terrific *(bhishana)*. He is also known as Kalabhairava, for even Kala (the god death) trembles before him.

In South India, Bhairava is shown standing by the side of a dog, his vehicle and he holds drum, noose, trident and skull-cup in his four hands. He wears a sacred thread,

composed of a garland of bells and the waisband is invariably a snake. He stands on a pedestal and his feet are bare. In the sculpture other than from Tamil country, Bhairava's sacred thread is a garland of skulls and he stands on wooden padukas (sandals) and not on the pedestal directly.

In the **Satarudriya**, he is referred to as Kshetrapala, which is evident from the epithet; *kshetranam pataye* (ie) protector of sacred city. This can be compared to Sankara's **Kalabhairavashtaka** referring to Kalabhairava as a protector of Varanasi *(kasikapuradhinatha kalabhairavam bhaje)*.

Representations of Bhairava are seen both in stone and metal.

Virabhadra:

He is represetned as standing on a pair of sandals with a fierce face. Usually he has four hands and sometimes eight. His right hand hold sword an arrow, while the left hands hold bow and mace. When he is shown with eight hands, weapons of war are held in his hands. He usually wears *jatamakuta*. Sometimes a royal head-dress showing a *linga* in the middle adorns his head. Daksha stands on his right side with the head of a goat and with the hands folded in worship. He (Daksha) is of small stature, evidently to indicate by contrast the hugeness of Virabhadra.

This aspect was assumed by Siva when his father-in-law Daksha insulted Parvati, as a result of which she committed suicide. To avenge the death of Parvati, Siva took the form of a gigantic figure to destroy the sacrifice organised by Daksha. When Virbhadra came to the sacrifical area, Daksha was transformed in to a goat.

Different accounts of the destruction of the sacrifice of Daksha, occur in the **Kurmapurana**, the **Varahapurana** and the **Bhagavatapurana**.

Detailed descriptions of the image of Virabhadra are given in the **Sritattvanidhi** and the **Karanagama**.

The **Rupamandana** while describing Virabhadra's image, says that "he should be placed before the Mothers *(matrikas)* the latter coming in the middle and Ganesa in the end". Here Virabhadra is shown as guardian of the Divine Mothers *(Sapta Matrikas)*. In this aspect he is represented in stone sculptures very often.

This aspect is represetned both in stone and metal.

Kalarimurti:

Siva is represented as a piercing Kala or Yama, the God of Death with his trident. He is usually shown as kicking Yama on his breast with his left leg. His right leg is shown as issuing out of the Linga. He is represented with four hands. In his upper right hand he holds an axe and the upper left is in the *vismaya* (wonder) pose. His lower right hand holds a trident, while his lower left is in the *varada* pose. Yama is shown a riding on his vehicle, bullock. Markandeya is represented as a young boy offering worship.

The story of this act is given in the puranas and the descriptions of this aspect at given in the **Amsumadbhedagama**, the **Kamikagama** and the **Karanagama**.

This form is related to the story of Markandeya, a great Sivabhakata who is protected from the clutches of Yama by Siva.

This representation is common in stone, but rare in metal.

Gajasamharamurti:

In this form Siva is represented as standing on the elephant's head and covering his body with its skin. The elephant's skin is stretched out and its (elephant) four feet can be seen in the corners, in the sculptures. Siva may have four or more hands. When having four hands, he holds the noose and the skin of the elephant in the upper hands and in the lower hands he holds the tusk and the skin of the elephant. When he (Siva) is shown with eight hands,

he holds the trident, kettle-drum noose and the skin in the right hands. In the left hands he holds the *kapala*, the tusk and skin of the elephant, while the fourth (left) hand is in the vismaya pose.

In some representations, shield and *ghanta* are associated with the hands.

The story of this aspect is given in detail in the **Kurmapurana**, the **Varahapurana**, and the **Suprabhedagama**. In all these texts, the accounts differ from each other.

Though there are various accounts on the origin of this aspect, the fact remains that Siva killed an *asura* in elephant form and had its (elephant) skin as his clothing is common to all.

Descriptions of this image are found in the **Amsumadbhedagama**, the **Silparatna** and other **Saivagamas**.

It may be incidentally suggested here that the mythology underlying Gajasamharamurti, might have developed out of the epithet *Krttivasa* (i.e.) (a god) who has the hide of an animal (elephant, here, Siva also may use tiger-skin as his apparel) for his garment, one of the hundred such epithets given to Rudra in the **Satarudriya** *(cf: Krttim Vasanah)*.

This representation is often met with in stone sculptures but in metal it is very rare like the one from the Siva temple at Valuvur (Tanjore Dist)., the reputed place of the destruction of Gajasura.

Tripurantakamurti:

Siva is here represented as Tripurantaka after he destroyed three *asuras*, who dwelt in three forts made of metals. The names of the three *asuras* are Vidyunmali, Tarakaksha and Kamalaksha.

He is usually represented with four hands. In his upper right and upper left he carries the axe and the antelope respectively, while in his lower right he holds an

arrow and in the lower left he holds a bow. In metal images his lower hands are shown in the attitude of holding the arrow and the bow.

The various gods assisted Mahadeva in destroying the asuras. Each of them parted with a half of their strength "Vishnu became his arrow, Agni its bark, and Yama its feather; Mahadeva made the Vedas his bow and Savitri his bow-string. Brahma became his charioter. With the three barbed arrow consisting of Soma, Agni and Vishnu, the castles with their inhabitants were destroyed by Mahadeva."

Detailed accounts of this aspect are available in the *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas*.

Description of this image is found in the **Amsumdbhedagama** and the **Uttarakamikagama**.

This representation is met with in stone, where he is shown as riding on a chariot. In metal he is (Siva) shown as standing on *padmasana* with a single pair of arms as seen in the image in the Gautam Sarabhai collections or two pairs of hands standing on a *padmasana* as seen in the image from Tirukkodikkaval, Thanjavur District (on show in the Bronze Gallery of this Museum). Sometimes he is shown as resting on an *apasmara*, as seen in the image from Vallam, Thanjavur District (on shown in the Bronze Gallery of this Museum).

Besides the above *Samharamurtis* there are a few others like Kamantakamurti (burning down the god of Love who came to meddle with his-Siva's austerities; Sarabhesamurti (Siva assuming the form of a mythical animal called Sarabha and tearing Narasimha (Vishnu), Andhakasuravadhamurti (Siva destroying the great demon Andhakasura), etc. which are represented in stone but not much in metal

Besides worshipping Vishnu or Siva as the case may be some people called Sakthas consider the female principle whom they call Devi, as the supreme deity. Since Sakthi

cult, is more akin to Siva cult and since the Sakthas identify her (Devi) with the consort of Siva the forms of Devi are dealt with under Siva.

Devi is worshipped independently and is represented as seated having four arms. In her upper arms She carries the *pasa* and the *ankusa*, while the lower arms are in the *abhaya* and *varada* poses. When she is represented as the consort of Siva, she has only two hands. While the right hand holds a flower or is kept in the *kataka* pose, evidently to have a fresh natural flower put in every day, instead of having to carry a metallic representation of the same, the left hand hangs down freely by the side

Devi has three main forms: Durga, the fighter, Kali and Mahalakshmi of Kolhapur.

Durga:

She is represented with four hands, the upper ones carrying the emblems of Vishnu and the lower ones being in the *abhaya* and *kataka* poses She wears a *karandamakuta* on the head and a *kuchabandha* (breast-band).

Sometimes she is represented as standing on a *padmasana* or on the head of a buffalo or seated on the back of a lioness

Mahishasuramardani:

She is a manifestation of Durga with more than two pairs of hands She is represetned as killing the demon king Mahishasura (demon with a buffalo head) who is seen lying at the feet of the Devi.

According to the **Silparatna,** in her right hands, she holds, *trisula, khadga, sakthyayudha, chakra* and a strigned bow, while in the left hands, she carries *pasa, ankusa, khetaka, parasu* and a bell. According to **Vishnudharmottara,** Mahishasuramardani is represetned with twenty hands. "The right ones carry respectively the *sula, khadga, sankha, chakra, bana, sakthi, vajra, abhaya, damaru* and an umbrella, while the left ones are seen to hold the *nagapasa, khetaka,*

parasu, ankusa, dhanus, ghanta, dhvaja, gada, a mirror and the *mudgara*".

Different accounts of the destruction of Mahishasura are given in the **Varahapurana**, the **Vamanapurana** and the **Padmapurana**. It may be said that this form of the Devi, "is one of her earliest and most important forms so beautifully delineated in the **Devimahatmya**". Though these texts "describe different iconic types of the goddess, the difference mainly lies in the number of arms that are attributed to the Devi".

For the destruction of Mahishasura, "the goddess was armed by the gods. In each of her ten hands she held one of the god's special weapons i.e. symbols of the divine power. Among these were vishnu's disc; Siva's trident; Varuna's conchshell; Agni's flaming dart; Vayu's bow; Surya's quiver and arrow; Yama's iron rod; Indra's thunderbolt; Kubera's club; and Brahma's rosary".

Kali

She is represetned with two pairs of hands carrying the emblems of Siva, except the antelope. She has a fearful appearance with small tusks protruding from the mouth. When represented with more than two pairs of arms, she is known as Bhadrakali and carries destructive weapons in her hands.

Mahalakshmi of Kolhapur:

She is represented as seated with two paris of hands carrying a mace and a shield in the upper pair of hands and a vessel and a bael fruit in the lower pairs of hands. She bears a linga on her head-dress.

Representation of the above forms of Devi are commonly met with in metal, except that of Mahalakshmi of Kolhapur which is rare in metal.

Ganesa:

He is the eldest son of Siva and Parvati and the chief of Sivaganas. He is known by different names such as Vighnesvara (Creator of obstacles), Vinayaka (remover of obstacles), Vighnaraja (King of obstacles), Vakratunda (one with twisted tusk), Ekadanta (one with a single tusk), Lambodara (potbellied one), Gajanana, Gajavadana, Karimukha and Gajavaktra (elephant faced), Balachandra (moon crested one), Akhu-ratha (riding upon a rat), Lambakarna (long-eared), and Dvideha (double-bodied). He is a remover of obstacles (Vinayaka) and he is a creator (Vignesvara) of them. Consequently he is worshipped by all Hindus at the commencement of every religious ceremony. No hamlet in Tamil Nadu, however small it may be is without a shrine for him.

He is said to have written down the **Mahabharatha**, from the dictation of Vyasa. There is a variety of legends, accounting of royalty and has connection with victory and success of anyking. The legends are narrated at length in the **Brahmavaivartapurana**. There is also a legend told regarding the circumstances which lead to the loss of his tusk in his fight with Parasurama.

He is represented as seated, standing and dancing. When seated he is shown on a lotus pedestal *(padmasana)* or on mouse, which is his vehicle. He is usually represented with a hook *(tanka)* and a noose *(pasa)*. In the lower hands he carries a broken tusk and wood apple or pudding. When represented with more than four hands, he carries the various saivite emblems.

There is a lot of difference between Ganesa of different centuries and in diffeent geographical regions. He has changed slowly but steadily all these centuries, as artistic notions and the moulder's fancies directed the fingers on the metal and chisel on the stone.

According to the tradition, Ganesa is a bachelor god but the legends attribute to him two consorts, Buddhi per-

sonification of wisdom and Siddhi, personification of success. With the growing popularity of Tantrism and Saktism, Ganesa was reprsented with his female counterpart, Devi seated beside him on his left lap or on his left hip. Ganapatya sect, one of the six sects (the other being Saiva, Vaishnava, Kaumara, Saura and Sakta), establish the practice of Ganesa worship, exclusively of the other deities in the Hindu pantheon.

The trunk of Ganesa is generally shown as turned towards the left. In rare cases it is turned to the right. In the former form he is known as *Idampuri* Vinayaka and in the latter form, *Valampuri* Vinayaka.

Representations of Ganesa are commonly seen both in stone and metal.

Subrahmanya:

He is the second son of Siva, and is most popular in South India, than in other regions of the country. There are many legends about his birth. He has various names and these have references to the circumstances of his birth. The most important names are: Karithikeya, Shanmukha, Saravanabhava, Senapathi, Guha, Skanda, Swaminatha, Agni-bhu, Kumara, Sakti-dhara, and Tarakajit (vanquisher of demon Taraka-who in several ways greatly harassed the gods). Mythologically, he is the god of war and the general of the Heaven.

He is represented with one pair of arms as a child or seated without his vehicle. When standing he is with two pairs of hands and with three or four or six pairs of hands when seated on a peacock. He usually carries weapons known as Sakti and Vajra. A bow and an arrow are also among his various weapons. He is represented with one head or with six heads.

He has two consorts Valli and Devasena. At Palani, he is worshipped as Palaniandi wearing only a loin cloth. His right hand holds a staff and the left hand is in the *Katyavalambita* pose. In some cases he carries a spear (Vel)

and hence he is known as Velayudha. He wears a *karandamakuta*. Peacock is his vehicle.

The **agamas** state that the "temples for Subrahmanya may be built in capital cities, in towns, villages, on the tops of mountains, on the banks of rivers, in gardens, forests or under large trees. They may stand separately as a *svayampradhana* temple or be attached to some others, such as that of Siva". "The temples of Subrahmanya are to be adorned with either peacocks or elephants, placed in the corners of the *vimana* where generally Garuda or Nandi is seen in the temples of Vishnu or Siva respectively."

Elaborate description of different varieties of the images of this god are found in the texts like the **Uttarakamikagama**, the **Suprabhedagama** and the **Sritattvanidhi**.

Representations of different varieties of the images of Subrahmanya are commonly met with in stone and woods and largely in metal.

Ayyanar:

He is the son of Siva and Mohini, a female form assumed by Vishnu after the churning of the ocean of milk. He is represented with a pair of hands. When seated on a lotus pedestal *(padmasana)* his right leg hangs down and the left leg folded, rests upon the seat vertically. The left hand is stretched out and rests on the knee of the left leg, while in the right hand he holds a crooked stick. Sometimes his right hand is held in the *kataka* pose to receive the stick. The head-dress is shown as spread out fan-wise in a circle. He is also represented as seated on an elephant or a horse. He has two consorts namely Madana and Vamani.

But according to the Tamil Nighantus (**Chudamani Nighantu**) his consorts are Purana and Pushkala.

In the Kerala state, he is known as Sasta, while in Tamil Nadu, he is known by the name Hariharaputra and more frequently Ayyanar. His worship is more popular in

Kerala and Tamil Nadu and he is a deity peculiar to the South. The *Suprabhedagama* distinctly narrates about the birth of Ayyanar.

Detailed descriptions of this deity are available in the **Amsumadbhedagama**, the **Suprabhedagama** and the **Karanagama**.

Images of Ayyanar either alone or with his consorts when alone on the back of the elephant or the horse are commonly available in metal.

Nandi:

Nandi is the vehicle of Siva. He is more often represented as bull, or in the human form with bull's head. He is an important member of the Siva cult.

There are 63 deified Saivite saints known as *Nayanmars* and are usually represented as standing with only one pair of hands. Among them, Chandikesvara, Karnappanayanar, Manikkavachaka, Appar, Tirujnanasambandha and Sundaramurti deserve special mention.

Chandikesvara:

He is represented either seated or standing on a lotus pedestal. While seated his left leg is bent at the knee and rests horizontally on the seat, while the right leg hangs down. His right hand holds an axe. His left hand either rests on the left thigh or is in *alinyavrada*. In the standing figures he is represented with folded hands *(anjali)* the axe resting on the left arm. He wears either a *jatamakuta*, *jatabandha* or *kesabandha*.

Detailed descriptions of this deity are found in the **Uttarakamikagama**, the **Purvakarangama** and the **Suprabhedagama**.

Representations of Chandikesvara are commonly met with in stone and metal. This Museum has an excellent piece of Chandikesvara image in metal, from Tiruvenkadu,

Thanjavur District and is assignable to the tenth century A.D.

Kannapanaynar:

He was a hunter who gave his eyes to Siva. He is represented in the attitude of worship and he carries a bow and arrow on his shoulders. He wears hunter's clothing and leather sandals.

Manikkavachaka:

He is the author of the **Tiruvachagam** hymns. His right hand is in the *upadesa* pose, while in his left he holds a leaf of manuscript.

Appar:

He is author of the *Tevaram* hymns. He carries a spud for cleaning temple premises and his hands are in an attitude of worship.

Tirujnansambandha:

He is represented as a child and as a youth. As a child he holds a cup for Parvati's milk in his left hand, and his right hand is in the *vismaya* pose. As a youth he is portrayed with a pair of cymbals, one in each hand.

Sundaramurti:

He was the last of the Saivite saints. He added to the **Tevaram** hymns, He is represented as singing in ecstasy. His right hand indicates the pitch of his song, while his left hand denotes the beating time.

Sometimes, he is represented as riding on the back of an elephant.

Representation of the above, *nayanmars* are commonly met with in metal.

The various weapons and emblems generally found in the hands of Siva and the members of the Siva cult, are

personified under the name *ayudhapurushas*. The important among them are: *Sula* (trident) and *Vel* (spear).

Sula:

This is taken in procession on festival days. On the obverse, it may have a small figure of Siva as Vrishavahana or Ardhanarisvara. On the reverse it is plain. When the observe it depicted with pidari, one of Kali's most terrible form, it *(Sula)* is known as Sulapidari.

Vel:

This is taken in procession in festivals pertaining to Subrahmanya are held. On the observe sometimes it may have a figure of Palaniandi, the presiding deity at Palani.

MISCELLANEOUS FIGURES

The guardians placed at the gates of the Vaishnavite and Saivite temples are known as *dvarapalakas* the *dvarapalikas*. They are represented with four hands and they carry the emblems or weapons of war or respective gods and goddesses.

The guardian deities of the directions are known as *Dikpalakas*. They are eight directions and each one is governed by a *Dikpalaka*.

Besides the above deities the nine planets known as *navagrahas* are also worshipped. Among them Surya and Chandra find representation in metal. They are described below.

Surya:

He is represented with a pair of hands, holding a lotus flower in each hand. A halo behind his head can be seen. He rides on a chariot having a single wheel drawn by seven horses.

He is attended by two female figures and two male figures. Their names differ according to different Sanskrit texts. The two female figures are his consorts: Chhaya and

Suvarchasa. The male figures are his *dvarapalakas*. Danda and Pingala. The charioteer, the lame Aruna, is driving the horse.

In Tamil Nadu, Surya is represented as standing with two hands and with a bare feet. (cf: Surya from Harischandrapuram, Thanjavur Dist., displayed in the Bronze Gallery of this Museum). An image of Surya in a chariiot and with his retinue, is also on display in the gallery of this Museum. Here the presence of discus and conch on the *prabhavali* "brings in a suggestion of the combined form Suryanarayana, the sun as a manifestation of Vishnu".

Texts like the **Silparatna**, the **Amsumadbhedagama** and the **Suprabhedagama** elaborately describe different varieties of the images of Surya.

Chandra:

The moon is represented with one pair of hands, holding a water lily in each hand. A halo behind him can be seen. He rides on a chariot having two wheels drawn by ten houses.

There are certain village deities known as *gramadevatas*. Though they are not worshipped by the orthodox Hindus, they are venerated by others. Most important among them are Munisvara and the attendants of Ayyanar, such as Maduraiviran, Sangilikaruppan, Karuppannaswami, etc. Besides these there are other local heroes who were deified and worshipped in the village.

BUDDHA

The sixth century B.C. witnessed a religious renaissance on the basis of the doctrines of Buddha and Mahavira. They spread the gospel of liberation *(moksha)* based on reason and freedom from rituals.

Since Buddhism is a development of the *upanishadic* philosophy "the Buddhist mythology which grew up about Buddhism drew upon the traditions of the land in which

the doctrine was first taught". It considered Buddha as a historical figure and at the same time put him in the pattern of previous incarnations, familiar to the Indian soil.

Buddha was considered too sacred to be represented in human form. So he was represented by symbols in the early period. After a few centuries he was represented in a human form.

According to *jataka* tales, Buddha had a number of previous birth known as Bodhisattva (Buddha elect). These tales narrate the incidents to mystify these lives and this resulted in the worship of minor deities and their female counterparts. This culminated in an immense pantheon of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Tara etc. whose images are frequently found in metal in South India.

Some of the important Buddhist images which are represented in the Museum collections are:

Buddha:

The main Buddhas, apart from Adi Buddha or Vajradhara are five. These are called Dhyani Buddhas, all of them seated. Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava, Vairochana and Akshobya, corresponding to the position of hands in *dhyana* or *samadhi, abhaya, varada, dharmachakramudra* and *bhusparsa.*

While he is represented as standing, he is shown with either the cloak covering one shoulder or sometimes both, with the right hand in *abhaya* and the left holding the hem of the garment. (cf. Buddha, standing, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dist., 10th Century A.D., displayed in the gallery of the Museum).

Avalokitesvara:

He is either represented as standing or seated with four hands. In the upper hands he carries a rosary and a vase, while the lower right is in *abhaya* and in the lower left he holds a lotus.

Maitreya:

He is represented as standing generally with two pairs of hands. In the upper hands he carries rosary and a bunch of five lotus flowers and the lower ones are in *abhaya* and *varada*. Figure of a *stupa* is to be seen on the head-dress.

Simhanada:

He is represented as seated in the *maharajalila* pose, with a pair of hands. The right hand is in the *kataka* pose and the left rests on the base.

Jambala:

He is represented as seated with a pair of hands. In the right hand he holds a citron and in the left he holds a mangoose. He is the Buddhist god of wealth. He is accompanied by his consort Vasudhara.

JAIN TIRTHANKARAS

Jainism centres round a series of 24 Tirthankaras among whom Mahavira was the last and the most popular.

They are represented, either seated in *dhyana* or standing with one pair of hands. All of them are almost alike and they have to be identified on the basis of the cognizance *(lanchana)* which can be seen on the pedestal right in the middle.

The list of Tirthankaras, with their respective emblems are given below.

1. RISHABHADEVA or ADINATHA, a bull (Sometimes distinguished by his Jatas)
2. AJITANATHA, an elephant
3. SAMBHVANATHA, a horse
4. ABHINANDANA, a monkey
5. SUMATINATHA, a wheel, circle or curlew.
6. PADMAPRABHA, a lotus
7. SUPARSVANATHA, a *svastika* on the throne and the hood of a 5-headed cobra above.
8. CHANDRAPRABHA, the crescent moon.
9. PUSHPADANTA or SUVIDHINATHA, a makara or a crab.
10. SITALANATHA, *Srivriksha* (the wishing-tree) or according to Svetambara sect, a triangular *srivatsa* mark.
11. SREYAMSANATHA, a deer, rhinoceros or garuda.
12. VASUPUJYA, a buffalo or bullock
13. VIMALANATHA, a boar

14. ANANTANATHA, a bear (or sometimes a falcon)

15. DHARMANATHA, a *vajra* (thunderbolt)

16. SANTHINATHA, a deer (or sometimes a tortoise)

17. KUNTHUNATHA, a goat

18. ARAHANATHA, a fish (or according to the Svetambara sect the square *nandyavarta* diagram of *svastika* affinity).

19. MALLINATHA, a water pot or a jar

20. MUNISUVRATA, a tortoise

21. NAMINATHA, a lily

22. NEMINATHA, or ARISHTANEMI, a conch.

23. PARSVANATHA, a snake on the throne and the hoold of a 7-headed cobra above.

24. MAHAVIRA, or VARDHAMANA, a lion.

"The Yakshas and Yakshinis associated with each Tirthankara, make up a regular host of deities associated with the Jain faith and in addition there is the representation of Bahubali, the saintly son of the first Tirthankara".

Though the Museum's collections are very limited, yet select Jain Bronzes from Bellary District and Singanikuppam, (S. Arcot District) are on display. The Bellary Jain bronzes are the products of the last phase of Western Chalukyan art. (12th Century A.D.) The Singanikuppam group of bronzes are noteworthy for the simplicity and elegance.

NOTES ON ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece: **MOTHER GODDESS,** Adichanallur, Tirunelveli Dt. About 7th Century B.C. Ht. 7. cm (p.v)

Plate I: **BUDDHA,** Amarvati, Guntur, Dt. About 4th century A.D. Ht. 43-5 cms. (p.V)

Thus is the earliest and most interesting bronze that was acquired from the excavations of the Amarvati Stupas, Guntur District. Amaravati was a great centre of stone and metal work.

Plate II: **SIMHANADA,** Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt. About 9th Century A.D. Ht. 10-3 cms. (p.59).

Seated in *maharajalila* pose, the figure suggests affinites with the Indonesian School.

Plate III: **VISHAPAHARANA,** Kilappudamur. Thanjavur Dt. About 9th Century A.D. Ht. 43 cms (p.33)

"This beautiful figure is a rare representation of Vishapaharana" and this indeed is one of the greatest master pieces of Pallava metal work. His sacred thread going over the right forearm is characteristic feature of the early images.

Plate IV: **VISHNU,** Locality unknown, About 9th Century A.D. Ht. 25 cms (p.4).

It shows all the features of Pallava workmanship. The Kirita somewhat high and has developed a *karanda* top which is rather peculiar. The depiction of PADMA itself instead of lotus design is noteworthy.

Plate V: **NATESA**, Okkur, Thanjavur District. About 9th Century A.D. Ht. 70 cms (p.38).

"This is an early piece showing the utmost simplicity in workmanship". The head dress of the figures shows for the first time the crescent and the Dhatura flower in the round. The disposition of the jatas, the representation of the tips of the *jatas* and the tubular shape of the auerole are noteworthy.

Plate VI: **NATESA**, Kuram, Chengalpatu Dt. About 9th Century A.D. Ht. 53 cms (p.38).

This is unique bronze figure of Siva dancing. The figure represents *urdhvajanu* pose, according to Bharatha's "Natyasastra" while according to the Tamil Sivaparakrama would be *bhujangalalita*. This is the only representation of Natesa in this pose in metal. It is noteworthy that "instead of the flame in the upper left hand, he carries a snake". It is more interesting to note that this metal icon comes from Kuram village, from where the famous Kuram plates of Parameswaravarman I (Pallava) were obtained.

Plate VII: **SOMASKANDA**, Tiruvalangadu, Chengalpattu Dt. About 9th Century A.D. Ht. 19 cms (p.30)

This most remarkable bronze "is probably the best of its kind" and is the smallest of the Somaskanda icons in the collection of this Museum. "The lovely little coronet for Parvati suggests its definitely Pallava date". The presence of *sula* and *Kapala* are quite interesting instead of the usual *abhaya* and *ahayavarada* pose.

Plate VIII: **BUDDHA,** Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt. About 10th Century A.D. Ht. 89 cms. (p.59).

This large bronze Buddha icon stands in the *samabhanga* (erect) posture. He has curly hair and a tiny flame takes the place of the *ushnisha* on the head. The facial expression is benign and the treatment of the figure is in the typical Chola style.

Plate IX: **SRINIVASA WITH CONSORTS.** Siruparaiyur, Thanjavur Dt. About 10th Century A.D. Ht. 44 cm (p.4)

This group of images is important for the study of early Chola sculpture. "The disposition of weapons, the general feature and the ornamentation for Vishnu and Devis closely follow the Chola tradition".

Plate X: **CHANDIKESVARA,** Tiruvengadu, Thanjavur Dt. About 10th Century A.D. Ht. 69 cms. (p.54).

This is an elegant bronze. The beautiful modelling, the disposition of the arms and the majestic expression make the figure a marvellous piece.

Plate XI: **KALI,** Tiruvengadu, Thanjavur Dt. About 10th Century A.D. Ht. 45.5 cms (p.50).

The fierceness of the goddess, iconographically natural to the deity is submerged in what looks like etheral representation of the figure. The restrained ornamentation of the image, the presence of *Skandhamala* on the right side only and natural rendering of *Kesabandha* are noteworthy.

Plate XII: **RAMA, LAKSHMANA AND SITA,** Vadakkuppaniyur, Thanjavur Dt. About 10th Century A.D. Ht. 112 cms (p.11).

"For sheer grace and majesty the figures composing this group have no rival. Rama is shown as a prince in all his dignity in an attitude of carrying the bow and arrows". "Lakshmana wears *Chhannavira*, symbol of his warlike qualities."

Plate XIII: **SITA,** Vadakkuppaniyur, Thanjavur Dt. About 10th Century A.D. ht. 82 cms (p.11).

"This is probably the finest representation of Sita in metal from anywhere in the South. The pearl tassels hanging from the *Katisutra*, the modelling of the body and the simple and effective treatment of the jewellery add a dignify to this lovely figure, a masterpiece of the Chola Craftsman".

Plate XIV: **PARVATI WITH AN ATTENDANT,** Tiruvengimalai, Tirchi Dt. About 10th Century A.D. Ht. 92 cms (p.49).

The main image (parvati) leans gently to the left. The modelling of the breasts, the treatment of *siraschakra* and the arrangement of the series of stands (about eight strands) of hair with curly ends is superb. The disposition of the right hand and the way in which the left hand is placed on the dwarf attendant add to the dignity of the image.

Plate XV: **GANESA,** Kodaikkadu, Thanjavur Dt. About 10th Century A.D. Ht. 42 cms. (p.50).

This beautiful figure of Ganesa, possess a pleasing stance, excellent proportions and superb modelling. The disposition of the

trunk in the *Valampuri* manner and the lovely *karandamakuta* are noteworthy.

Plate XVI: **BUDDHA**, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt. About 11th Century A.D. Ht. 74.5 cm. (p.59)

Buddha is attended by Nagaraja Chauri bearers, "The anatomy of the whole figures is smooth suggestive of flesh, hands, legs, nose and fingers being done to perfection. The whole composition is typically South Indian (Late Chola)".

Plate XVII: **ARDHANARISVARA**, Tiruvengadu, Thanjavur Dt, 11th Century A.D. Ht. 100 cms. (p.33)

The finest representation of this form in metal. It is referred to in an inscription in the temple at Tiruvengadu.

Plate XVIII: **NATESA**, Tiruvalangadu, Chengalpattu Dt. About 11th Century A.D. Ht. 97 cms. (p.38).

The most well-known figure of dancing Siva, which attracted the attention of the world famous sculptor, Rodin, The image is remarkable for its grace, its vigour, its perfect modelling, its rhythmic movement and its majestic expression.

Plate XIX: **VENUGOPALA WITH CONSORTS** Chimakurti, Guntur Dt. About 11th Century A.D. Ht. 22.5 cms. (p.13).

An excellent example of Eastern Chalukyan art. The simplicity in headgear, ornamentation and drapery are noteworthy.

Plate XX: **SRINIVASA WITH CONSORTS**, Vadakkupparaiyur, Thanjavur Dt. About 11th Century A.D. Ht. 81 cms. (p.4).

The best example of an early Chola representation of Srinivasa in the collection of this Museum.

Plate XXI: **PARVATI**, Okkur, Thanjavur Dt. About 11th Century A.D. Ht. 64 cms. (p.49).

The beautiful flexion of the left arm, the projecting elbow ornaments in the form of a fan and the excellent anatomy of the figure are noteworthy.

Plate XXII: **NATESA**, (leg-reversed), Prouppumettuppatti, Madurai Dt. About 11th Century A.D. Ht. 105 cms. (p.38)

Siva in this form dances by lifting his right leg up planting his left leg on the large dwarf *Apasmara*, who is very realistically represented. The emblems in the upper hands of Siva are mutually changed. It is one of the rare specimens of metal icon from Madurai District.

Plate XXIII: **Tripurantaka**, Tirukkodikkaval, Thanjavur Dt. About 11th Century A.D. Ht. 99 cms. (p.47)

This is one of the finest examples of Siva as Tripurantakamurti. While he carries the emblems in the upper hands (deer is missing in the upper left hand) the lower hands are in the attitude of carrying bow and arrow. The workmanship of the *Jatamakuta*, ornaments and the grace in the moulding of the figure are in the classical Chola style.

Plate XXIV: **MAITREYA**, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt. About 11 Century A.D. Ht. 75 cms. (p.59)

Rare example of the deity in metal. The presence of a *stupa* on the *makuta* points to

the identity of the image as that of Maitreya.

Plate XXV: **SURYA,** Harischandrapuram, Thanjavur Dt. About 12th Century A.D. Ht. 56 cms. (p.57)

Images of Suriya are very rare. According to the southern tradition, this image stands bare-footed.

Plate XXVI: **VINADHARA,** Vadarangam, Thanjavur Dt. About 12th Century A.D. Ht. 66 cms. (p.37)

"This is a good example of late Chola workmnship and presents Siva as the Lord of Music with his hands in the attitude of carrying a *Vina*".

Plate XXVII: **SUDARSANA,** Locality unknown. About 13th Century A.D. Ht. 54 cms. (p.23)

"This is a remarkable representation of the personified wheel of Vishnu. The wheel on the head is interesting as it shows a continuity of tradition from earlier times, as noticed in Deogarh and elsewhere".

Plate XXVII: **KAUMODAKI,** Locality unknown. About 13th Century A.D. Ht. 54 cms. (p.24)

A representation of the personified club of Vishnu. This is all the more interesting as the club of Vishnu is always personified as a female and not as a male.

Plate XXIX: **BHAIRAVA,** Locality unknown. About 13th Century A.D. Ht. 14 cms. (p.43)

Here is the concept of the Lord in one of his most terrifying aspects. The workmanship is characteristic of images in late style.

Plate XXX: **KANKALAMURTI,** Tirukkalar, Thanjavur 13 Dt. About 13 Century A.D. Ht. 33 cms. (p.42)

The *jatamakuta,* the ornaments and the *Katisutra* are stylised. The depiction of the little deer is quite interesting.

Plate XXXI: **MAHAVIRA,** Singanikuppam, South Arcot Dt. About 14 Century A.D. Ht. 84 cms. (p.61)

This is a beautiful specimen of the art. Though the image stands erect, the workmanship is smooth and pleasing.

Plate XXXII: **AIYANAR,** Thogur, Thanjavur Dt. About 14th Century A.D. Ht. 57 cms. (p.53)

This is a typical example of Aiyanar image on an elephant with the attendant behind him.

Plate XXXIII: **MANIKKAVACHAKA,** Settipulam, Thanjavur Dt. About 16th Century A.D. Ht. 59 cms. (p.55)

The author of Thiruvachagam, holding the manuscript in his left palm and right hand showing upadesa pose. The details in the image are shown beautifully.

Plate XXXIV: **VIRABHADRA,** Tiruvalangadu, Chengalpattu Dt. About 16th Century A.D. Ht. 95 cms. (p.44)

Though the ornaments have heavy stiffness, the image is well executed and it is remarkable for its vigour.

Plate XXXV: **TIRUMANGAI ALVAR,** Srinivasanallur, Tiruchi Dt. About 16 Century A.D. Ht. 75 cms. (p.22)

This is particularly well executed bronze and it is a powerful representation of the aspect.

Plate XXXVI: **KANNAPPA NAYANAR,** Tiruvalangadu, Chengalpattu Dt. About 17th Century A.D. Ht. 78 cms. (p.55)

The hands are shown in *anjali* pose. He wears a high *kesabandha* on his head, and he has a bow and a quiver on his shoulder. He wears sandals in his feet. The modelling and decorative details are in Vijayanagar style.

Plate XXXVII: **CRAWLING KRISHNA,** Ulundangudi, Tiruchi Dt. About 17th Century A.D. Ht. 15 cms. (p.13)

The front hair is elegantly curled.

Plate XXXVIII: **BRAHMA,** Locality unknown. About 17th Century A.D. Ht. 40 cms. (p.1)

The four faces are united at the ears, of which there are likewise four, each bearing a large pyriform pendant. The attributes are held in the upper hands i.e. rosary and *kamandalu.*

Plate XXXIX: **KALI,** Karappidagai, Thanjavur Dt. About 19th Century A.D. Ht. 16 cms. (p.50)

The image is cast in folk style and this is an excellent specimen where all the conceivable items of a crude style are present in a perfect manner.

Plate XL: **MADURAIVIRAN,** Naikuppam, Ramanathapuram Dt. About 19th Century A.D. Ht. 11.5 cms. (p.58)

The knotting of the hair to the right is noteworthy

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BUDDHA
Amaravati, Guntur, Dt
About 5th century A.D

SIMHANADA
Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt
About 9th Century A D

VISHAPAHARANA
Kilappudanur Thanjavur Dt
About 9th Century A D

VISHNU
Locality unknown,
About 9th Century A.D.

NATESA

Chōlan Thanjavur District

About 11th Century A.D

NATESA

Kuram, Chengalpatu Dt

About 9th Century A D

SOMASKANDA

Tiruvalangadu Chengalpattu Dt

About 9th Century A D

Plate VIII

BUDDHA
Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt.
About 10th Century A D

SRINIVASA WITH CONSORTS
Sirupanaiyur, Thanjavur Dt.
About 10th Century A D

CHANDIKESVARA
Tiruvengadu Thanjavur Dt.
About 10th Century A.D

KALI
Tiruvengadu, Thanjavur Dt
About 10th Century A D

RAMA, LAKSHMANA AND SITA
Vadakkupparuvur Thanjavur Dt
About 10th Century A D

SITA

Vadakkupanayur, Dharmapuri Dt
About 10th Century A D

DEVI WITH ATTENDANT
Tirutengimalai, Tiruchi Dt.
About 10th Century A.D

GANESA
Kadaikkadu, Thanjavur Dt
About 10th Century A D

BUDDHA

Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt.

About 11th Century A.D.

ARDHANARISVARA
Tiruvengadu, Thanjavur Dt
11th Century A D

NATESA

Tiruvalangadu, Chengalpattu Dt
About 11th Century A D

VENUGOPALA WITH CONSORTS
Chimakurti, Guntur Dt.
About 11th Century A.D.

SRINIVASA WITH CONSORTS
Vadakkupparnaiyur Thanjavur Dt
About 11th Century A D

PARVATI
Oldur, Thanjavur Dt.
About 11th Century A D

NATESA

(leg-reversed), Pouppumettuppatti, Madurai Dt
About 11th Century A D

Tripurantaka
Tirukkadikkarai Thanjavur Dt
About 11th Century A D

MAITREYA
Nagapattinam, Thanjavur Dt
About 11 Century A D

SURYA

Harischandrapuram, Telangana, Dt

About 12th Century A.D

VINADHARA
Vadarangam, Thanjavur Dt
About 12th Century A D

SUDARSANA
Locality unknown
About 13th Century A D

KAUMODAKI
Locality unknown
About 11th Century A D

BHAIRAVA

Locality unknown

About 13th Century A D

KANKALAMURTI
Tirukkalar, Thanjavur Dt
About 13 Century A D

MAHAVIRA
Singanikuppam, South Arcot Dt
About 14th Century A D

AIYANAR
Thygur, Thanjavur Dt
About 14th Century A.D

MANIKKAVACHAKA
Settipulam, Thanjavur Dt.
About 14th Century A D

VIRABHADRA
Tiruvalangadu, Chengalpattu Dt
About 16th Century A D

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Sirunvasanallur, Tiruchi Dt
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About 19th Century A.D.